

SOVIET
LITERATURE

Monthly

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9

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Alexander Tvardovsky

STOVEMAKERS



Alexander Tvardovsky, son of a village blacksmith, was born in 1910 in Smolensk gubernia. His first verse appeared in 1924 in a local newspaper. In 1928 Tvardovsky moved to the city of Smolensk where he worked at all sorts of odd jobs, reporting for local newspapers and writing poetry.

The poet acquired fame when his poem, *The Land of Muravia*, appeared in print in 1936.

In the meantime Tvardovsky continued his studies and in 1939 graduated from the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature.

During the war Tvardovsky wrote for front-line newspapers. Besides several books of verse he also produced his tremendously popular poem *Vasili Tyorkin* in those years. In 1947 he published another major poem, *A House by the Roadside*, and a volume of stories and sketches, called *At Home and Abroad*. He is now at work on a major poem, *Space Beyond Space*, a summing-up of travelling in his own country and abroad. Two excerpts from this poem have already been published in this magazine.

The story which we publish below is Tvardovsky's latest.

That stovemakers were very unusual people and the trade of the stove-maker a very unusual trade, with a touch of mystery about it that put it in the realm of magic, I had known ever since I was a boy, not so much from personal experience, it is true, as from the innumerable stories, legends, and tales I had heard about them.

In the place where I was born and grew up there was a stovemaker of great renown called *Mishechka*. We used this diminutive form of his real name, in spite of his advanced age, perhaps because of his being so small, although it was a com-

mon thing with us to call grown-ups and even old men by this particular diminutive form: Mishechka, Grishechka, Yurochka, and so on.

Among other things, Mishechka was famous for eating clay. This I had seen him do with my own eyes, when he relaid the burnt-out bottom of our own stove at home. Having carefully pounded the clay with warm water until it glistened like butter, he took a good-sized lump on his finger, tucked it away in his cheek, chewed it and swallowed it, smiling very much like a conjurer who wishes to show that the performance of his trick causes him no difficulty whatever. I remember how Mishechka crawled inside our stove and, crouching under its low vault, hacked out the old floor bricks under his parted legs with a special stove-maker's hammer. How he managed to get there—he may have been small but he was not a baby—I simply couldn't understand. One winter I had a cold and my grandmother had tried to give me a heat cure in the stove, but it seemed so cramped, hot and frightening that I yelled at the top of my voice and struggled to get out so violently that I nearly ended by falling off the ledge on to the floor.

Now I realize that the idea of Mishechka's innocent trick of eating clay in public was to stress his exceptional professional qualifications. It was as if he were saying: see, not everybody can do this, and not everybody can build a stove.

But Mishechka, like the good spirit of the old fairy-tales, was kind and harmless and never used the opportunities inherent in his trade for doing people a bad turn. Not as some other stovemakers, who if they took a dislike to a customer for some reason, could cause them a great deal of worry and bother. It was a favourite trick to fix a broken bottleneck somewhere inside the chimney so that the stove would sing in all kinds of dismal voices, foretelling ill luck and disaster for the house and its occupants. Or a brick would be hung up in a certain spot on a piece of string strong enough to last the first trial heating. Everything would go well until the second or third day, when the string burnt through, causing the brick to fall and block the chimney so that the stove could not be fired and there was no way of finding out what was wrong except by pulling it to pieces and rebuilding it.

There were other tricks of a similar kind. Besides, stoves of the same design differed from each other in the way they warmed up and gave off their heat, and in length of life. And so by tradition the people in our parts stood rather in awe of stovemakers and went out of their way to please them. One must take into account what a large place, both literally and figuratively, the stove used to have in the old peasant way of life. It was not only a source of warmth, not only a kitchen in itself, but a bakery, a drying place for all kinds of things, a bath-house, a laundry, and finally the favourite nook for a delicious rest after a long day's work in the cold, after a journey, or simply when it was a matter of curing various aches and pains. To put the thing in a nutshell, no stove meant no home. I had come to learn this by experience and of late I had thought so much and so deeply about stoves and stovemakers that I could probably write a thesis on the subject.

I had been given a place to live just across the road from the school. It was a peasant's cottage attached to two similar cottages in which other teachers lived. My cottage was divided into two rooms and the partition came in the middle of a big two-piece stove which jutted out into the front room as a cooking range, and into the other half as a huge Dutch-type stove. This stove for a long time caused me great vexation and misery, verging at times on utter despair. In class, during lessons, in any place, in public or alone, at any occupation I had only to think of the house I lived in and that stove and I would feel that my thoughts were getting muddled and that I couldn't concentrate and that I was turning into an embittered and unhappy man.

It was very difficult, almost impossible to get that stove going. The range could be heated after a fashion, though for me, who was living temporarily without my family, the range was not of much importance. But as soon as you ventured to light the Dutch stove to heat the back room, where I worked and slept, you had to open the window and doors to let out the smoke that filled the whole house as if it were a chimney. At first, seeing the caretaker struggling in vain with it, I tried to light the stove myself, but the same thing happened to me. Smoke poured out of the door, out of the fire-box, seeped through hidden chinks round the chimney and even found its way out of the rings of the cooking range in the front room. It couldn't have smoked worse if you had forgotten to open the flue.

A great many tricks were employed to light this stove, the whole wealth of experience and resource of people who had to deal with ten or more school stoves that were constantly in use.

The caretaker Ivanovna and her husband, Fyodor Matveyev, a cripple, were real experts at the job. Each had his own method or system, quite different from the other's but equally efficient. Briefly the difference could be stated like this. Ivanovna started with fire, and Fyodor with wood. I learned both these methods thoroughly. Ivanovna, a nimble, quick-witted little woman, would light a curled bit of birch bark, a handful of shavings, and a few scraps of newspaper or wood chips in an otherwise empty stove and by gradually adding handfuls of chips and shavings would build up a strong lively flame on which the logs could be piled until there was no room for more.

Fyodor, on the other hand—mainly, I suppose, because he was a cripple and could not move about quickly—preferred to build up the wood first in the shape of a cage or a tent, selecting the pieces of wood and arranging them as if he were solving some complex problem of design. And only when he had done this would he set fire to his structure with birch bark, shavings, or scraps of paper. And the result was just as good as his wife's. The stove would get going quickly, the wood would burn evenly, there would never be any fug, and the stove would never cool off before it should. But my stove gave equally bad results no matter what the method.

I began to think quite seriously that some trick, like the ones that used to be played in the old days, had gone into the making of my stove.

In my misfortune I gradually found out the whole history of this unlucky stove. It turned out that no one wanted to live in this cottage because of it. The history teacher, so I was told, had put up with it for a while, then run away. In the summer Ksenia Arkadieвна, the maths teacher, had lived there while the next-door house was being done up, but in the autumn she had moved even before the decorators had finished.

The stove had originally been built by German prisoners-of-war, after which it had twice been rebuilt by various unknown stovemakers, but always with the same ill luck. It was a ticklish matter for me to propose to the headmaster that the stove should be rebuilt once more. But it would have to be done eventually, only I didn't want the fourth attempt to be a failure.

I had been told that there was one man in the district, a certain Yegor Yakovlevich, who could build a stove that was guaranteed to work, but lately he had been very unwilling to take on such jobs; he had his railwayman's pension to live on, a house and garden of his own and he just wasn't interested. We sent him a note by his grandson in the fourth form but there was no answer. Fyodor went to see him once, and another time met him somewhere in the village. But it was always the same story, either he was ill or else he had undertaken some job elsewhere and couldn't promise anything in the future.

Still the matter couldn't be put off any longer. The November holiday was over and winter was coming on. Even now I could only get to sleep in my room because of my experience of sleeping in the trenches; I had to correct my pupils' dictations and compositions at school, in the teachers' common room, when everyone else had gone home. On top of everything, I was very much afraid that my wife Lolya, in spite of all my stern warnings, might suddenly descend on me with our five-month-old son before I could get the place in order.

The whole wretched business quite wore me out. It was not only the stove that got on my nerves, but all the talk and speculation about it that went on among the other members of the staff, the headmaster, the caretakers and even, I was sure, the pupils as well, for children always know all about their teachers' private lives. Even now that the whole silly story of the stove is over and done with, I feel I can't make light of it in the telling, and that I discuss it with a seriousness it hardly deserves. But just ask anybody, particularly a housewife who has to make do with stove heating, how much a bad stove means to her in her everyday life, what an effect it has on her mood, how it tells on her work, and she will tell you that a bad stove can turn you grey before your time. And besides I had to think of all this trouble with the stove from the point of view of my wife Lolya, a town-bred woman, and a young mother to boot, who would have to live with me in this house.

One morning I was wakened earlier than usual by the light reflected through the windows from the snow that had fallen overnight and it was on that morning that a clear, simple and apparently hopeful solution occurred to me.

I remembered the local military commandant's office and the major I had talked to there when I had called to register as an officer of the reserve. At the risk of appearing foolish I would go and see him and ask him to help me. All

he would have to do would be to look up his files of people liable for service and find someone who had his name down as a stovemaker, and that would be the man for me.

The major received me in his tiny cubby-hole of an office divided from the rest of the big log-walled room by a plywood partition.

He had a plain worried face with a bunch of wrinkles that folded up under his thick dark hair and made his forehead low and narrow and gave him a very fierce expression. And now that face lengthened.

"Well, that's not so easy," he began, lighting a cigarette, "it's not a very common trade. It would be different if you wanted a cobbler or a smith. But a stovemaker. . . ." Suddenly he smiled, exposing his big nicotine-stained teeth and broad upper gum. "Every soldier is his own stovemaker. I'll have a look though."

It turned out that there were some stovemakers, but one of them was disabled and had only one arm, another lived too far away, a third was chairman of a big collective farm, so there was no point in going to him, and the last one had only been born in 1926. The major himself said a stovemaker ought to be older than that. There were other candidates whom we also rejected for one reason or another.

"I'll tell you what to do," the major said, after he had heard all about my troubles. "You go and see that miracle-worker Yegor Yakovlevich yourself. I've also heard he's a very fine craftsman. Go and talk to him. And if it doesn't work, come back here and we'll think up something." And again he gave me that big toothy smile of his, slightly covering his mouth with his hand, as people who have lost a front tooth do when they smile, specially women.

This last suggestion of his, for all the sympathy he had shown, seemed to me nothing more than ordinary non-committal politeness.

The next day I set off along the muddy edge of the main road through the village to see Yegor Yakovlevich. The snow, which had fallen on the unfrozen earth, only lay in the gardens and yards where no one walked.

It was early and I was glad there were so few people about. I didn't want anyone to see me and know where I was going. I felt as though I were wearing boots that were too small for me, and that everyone knew about it and was sorry for me—sorry but at the same time a little amused. If there is anything I dislike it's being the object of pitying amusement. And I think I have been much more sensitive about it since I became a married man, the head of a family; I shouldn't really have cared at all if I had been just a bachelor.

But now I walked along feeling that the old woman in rubber boots by the well, and the girl with a loaf of bread under her arm, and the two little boys who greeted me at the crossroads, all knew not only where I was going, but also that I had not long been married, that I was inexperienced and lacked confidence in arranging my domestic affairs, and perhaps they even knew that my mother-in-law, who was a doctor in town, a very handsome woman, by no means old, and still rather unwilling to acknowledge the fact that she was a grandmother, had no very great respect for me, and that I was either shy or afraid of her. And



that when we had been living in her flat Lolya and I had had the smaller room while she had the big separate room all to herself.

I had little faith in the success of my mission, for I already had a picture in my mind of Yegor Yakovlevich as an ailing old man with little incentive to earn money. There is nothing worse than asking someone to do something he doesn't want to do or has no need of doing.

I turned off down a sloping slippery path along a fence that one had to cling to for safety and, entering a gate, went up to Yegor Yakovlevich's glassed-in verandah.

The verandah door was locked. Through the window I saw that the floor was strewn with cabbages and carrots. A long severe face with a straggling beard appeared at one of the windows and a hand signalled to me that the entrance was on the other side.

I went round the house, climbed a muddy flight of steps and, for propriety's sake, knocked at a heavy door padded with rags.

"Pull it!" A hoarse yet powerful voice called from within. "Pull it!"

I entered a large kitchen with two windows. At a table by the right-hand window sat an old man—not really old but of a pretty good age, with a long, stern, rather sallow and unhealthy face and a wispy beard that had once been ginger but was now a brownish grey. On the table stood a samovar, the remains of a meal (yesterday's presumably) and an empty vodka bottle. The man was calmly, and with what seemed to me deliberate disregard for my presence, slicing an apple and dropping the rings into a glass of tea. So this was Yegor Yakovlevich.

"Can't do it," he said briefly and with a kind of cold sadness, almost before I had explained what I had come about.

I was standing on the doorstep and I could either take a chair at the table, if he offered it, or I could sit down on a wooden bench by the door, which was

cluttered with boxes, felt boots, flower pots, and other rubbish. I could take a seat there without invitation, although conversation would be difficult, like trying to talk to someone across a street.

Nevertheless I sat down on the bench and again began expounding my request, trying, of course, to put in a word here and there about his great reputation as a stovemaker. I tried deliberately to present my troubles with the stove in a humorous light, putting all the emphasis on my own helplessness and inexperience in such matters.

But he treated all this as something in the nature of things and of no interest whatsoever. He didn't interrupt me, but the effect was as if he had said: "You can go on talking just as long as you like, it's all the same to me, I'm only drinking my tea anyway." He didn't even look at me, being more occupied with looking out of the window at the muddy uninviting street, at the bushes in his garden and the wet discomfort of the yard, all of which is a pleasant enough sight when you are sitting in your favourite nook drinking tea in the warmth of a good reliable stove. Obviously he knew the value of this old man's morning hour for tea and a smoke with its opportunity for leisurely and untroubled contemplation.

I soon began to feel that the kitchen was very much overheated. Advertisement, I thought, and added to my discourse yet another servile compliment about how warm and nice it was to come in out of the cold into such a well-heated house.

"No, I won't take it on," he interrupted me again, moving aside his glass and saucer and proceeding to smoke.

"But Yegor Yakovlevich!"

"Yegor Yakovlevich, Yegor Yakovlevich," he mimicked me lazily, pointedly ignoring the flattery implied in my zealous use of his name and patronymic. "I've told you I can't do it. And that's all."

It would be true to say that no district or even regional inspector of education or any other highly placed official with secretaries, telephones, and a reception room waiting line could have spoken to me with such aloofness and languid arrogance. No matter how severe and remote, he would have had to give some sort of explanation as to why he was unable to satisfy my request.

"Why not, Yegor Yakovlevich?"

"Because," he replied in the same melancholy and impressive tone, "there is only one Yegor Yakovlevich but there's plenty of people who want him to do things. I've only got two hands, you know." He spread his big bony hands protruding from the short sleeves of his much-washed vest and tapped his lofty forehead with his finger. "Two hands and one head, and that's all."

These gestures were of an explanatory nature, specially adapted to the level of my intelligence, and they showed that Yegor Yakovlevich was far from underestimating his own importance.

"But, Yegor Yakovlevich," I ventured, "if it's the payment you're worried about, for my part I'm quite willing. . . ."

"Payment's got nothing to do with it!" He gave a careless wave of his big heavy hand. "Everyone knows how much I charge. What I'm saying is I won't take it on. Do it for one person and someone else will come asking. So it's better not to do it for anyone, then no one will feel hard done by. There was a man here yesterday," he indicated the vodka bottle with the cigarette in his left hand, "did everything he could to persuade me. . . ."

"But what about me, Yegor Yakovlevich?"

"I've told you already," he again lifted his heavy-boned hand to the empty bottle, almost touching it with his little finger, "there was a man here yesterday. . . ."

He indicated this empty bottle with such conviction as evidence of some suppliant visitor, that I found myself regarding it almost as a living person who, like myself, was also in dire need of Yegor Yakovlevich's good will.

And then I realized a simple fact that should have occurred to me at the outset.

"Well, what about it, Yegor Yakovlevich?" I said resolutely approaching the table, "suppose we make a day of it? . . ." I lifted the bottle gently to make my meaning clear.

Yegor Yakovlevich looked up at me with his light-blue eyes slightly blood-shot with age, and the shadow of a smile appeared on his pale lips.

"I don't use it of a morning." And in the tone of this refusal there was not only aloofness but didactic disapproval. "I never use it of a morning," he repeated even more firmly. And he leaned on the table to get up, evidently wishing to show that the audience was over. "Of course, there was a man here yesterday. . . ."

And I decided that to him I was simply "a man," like the one who stood on the table between us in the shape of the empty bottle: there were many of us and only one Yegor Yakovlevich.

He saw me into the porch and, standing at the open door, for some reason made a parting remark that had a touch of sympathy for my disappointment: "If I happen to be passing I may drop in."

"Please do," I responded mechanically, though by now I couldn't see why in the world he should come and see me.

I left in the very depths of despair. It was as if I had tried to do something low and mean and had been caught in the act. Why had I gone to this man, begging and wheedling at the expense of my dignity? Let others do that, it was not my job. But what was I to do? Wait until the headmaster "took the matter up personally," until one of the district stovemakers had time for me, until my wife after some disagreement with her mother decided that it would be better to live in a barn than without her husband and arrived before anything was ready?

The more I thought about the situation the more depressed I became and since I could think of no one to put the blame on I began to grumble about bad management.

Here we were building unique blast furnaces out of hundreds of different types of bricks, constructing buildings that would stand as memorials of our life

and work on earth, examples for our distant descendants of the greatness of our interests and aspirations, but as for building a stove, an ordinary stove like the ones they must have had way back in the days of Kiev Russ, a simple heating installation for the home of a working intellectual, a teacher of the Russian language and literature, that was an impossible task!

I walked home developing more and more irrefutable arguments to the effect that such a situation was quite intolerable and utterly abnormal. The phrases came into my head one after another, lyrically impassioned, bitterly sarcastic, full of conviction, truth and clarity. I was no longer telling myself these things, I was composing a speech that I was to deliver to a large audience somewhere, or in an interview with some very highly-placed personage. Or perhaps it was an article for the press, fervently and honestly drawing attention to the problem of providing for the needs of the rural intelligentsia. But that wasn't enough for me now. I was beginning to touch on the existing forms and methods of instruction and so on and so forth. Little by little, without realizing it I was getting away from my stove.

I had such a desire to talk to someone about all these things, to share my penetrating observations and irrefutable arguments, to recite aloud the purple passages of my mental tirade, throwing in a quotation here and there as if they had occurred to me on the spur of the moment.

I went to see the major without any thought of his promise to "think up something" about the stove, I just went to see him. He lived not far from his office in a semi-detached wooden house with a porch exactly similar to the one next door.

I was told that he had already gone off to work, and it was there I found him, in his quiet deserted little office. He rose to meet me, quickly closing a thick notebook and pushing it away into his desk. The excitement on my face produced by physical and mental exertion must have made him think I had been successful.

"Well, how's it going?"

I told him of my visit, and now everything struck me as rather funny, and to my own surprise found myself giving a humorous description of Yegor Ya-



kovlevich and the important air with which he had sat there drinking tea and turning down my request. I even imitated his gesture at the bottle: "There was a man here yesterday. . . ." And we enjoyed the joke together.

"Well," said the major, "it looks as if I'll have to build you a stove myself."
"How do you mean?"

"Out of bricks!" He laughed, showing his big teeth and lifting his hand to his mouth.

It was only then that I noticed something rather likeable and rather touching about that smile of his. It immediately transformed his gloomy worried face.

"You mean you want to remake the stove yourself?"

"Yes, I'd give the job to my assistant but he couldn't do it." The major seemed to find a certain satisfaction in observing my confusion. "Tomorrow's Saturday, isn't it? We'll start tomorrow evening then."

It was all quite simple and yet at the same time a little embarrassing. After all the major was in a sense my superior, and it was hardly the thing for him to hire himself out to me as a stovemaker.

"Don't you trust me? You've been to my house, haven't you? Didn't you see the stove? Made it myself. The wife likes it."

"I do, of course, I'm very grateful. But then we must reach some sort of agreement."

"About my fee?" he prompted me with a cheerful readiness. "Don't worry, we'll strike a bargain all right."

"But hadn't we better. . . ."

"We'd better drop that subject. A fine thing that'd be—the district military commandant supplementing his salary by building stoves on the side! I'd like to know what headquarters would say if they heard about that!"

"But suppose they hear you are making stoves?"

"Let them. That's nobody's business but my own. I made this myself, too," he passed his hand over his tunic and trousers, "I get the cloth and make it up myself. I make all my children's outer clothes too, I could do the same for you."

The following evening he arrived at my place with a bundle under his arm. It contained an old pair of summer uniform trousers and a tunic, and also a stovemaker's hammer, a metal rule, a roll of wire, and some lengths of string.

He inspected the stove and the cooking range from all angles, then placed a chair in the middle of the room facing the stove, sat down and lighted a cigarette while he contemplated it.

"Hm . . ." he said after a time.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. It'll make a lot of mess."

"That doesn't matter. The caretaker will clean up afterwards."

"Have you got any wood?" he asked.

"Yes. But what for?"

"To light it with."

"When you've built the new stove, you mean?"

"No, first of all we'll try and light this one."

I thought he must be joking, or else he had forgotten all I had told him about my stove.

"But you'll only smoke the place out. Don't you believe me?"

"Of course I do. But we've got to light it all the same. Where's the wood?"

There was some wood in the corridor, including several charred logs that had been in the stove more than once already.

The major stripped off his tunic and set about the job with such assurance that I began to wonder if Ivanovna and I had perhaps overlooked something that had been responsible for our failure in the past. Now the major would light the stove and it would turn out to be quite all right. That would be excellent, but what a fool I would look after all the fuss I had made!

To my great relief the stove smoked just as much as it had when lighted by Ivanovna, Fyodor, or myself.

"No, Comrade Major," I said.

"What do you mean 'no'?"

"It won't burn."

"All the better. That's just what we want!" he laughed. "What we want to know is why it doesn't burn."

The kindling had burnt up; the thicker wood had merely blackened without even catching; the place was full of smoke as usual. The major went outside to look at the chimney. I went out too. It was still light.

How many times after firing the stove had I run outside to see if a wisp of smoke was coming from the chimney. From boyhood I could remember that if you stared very hard at the top of a chimney, perhaps just to know whether they had lighted the samovar at home, the air would seem to quiver above the chimney but no smoke would appear.

The major went back into the house, took a length of string with a heavy bolt tied to the end of it and climbed the step-ladder on to the roof. I watched him lower the bolt down the chimney and start fishing with it. It was just like someone trying to hook a lost pail out of a well.

Just then a tall man in a half-length coat with a rusty-looking fur collar and diagonal pockets on the chest stopped in the road and holding his left hand to the peak of his cap stared up at our roof. In his right hand he carried a light stick. When the major pulled his string out of the chimney and climbed down the roof, the man approached us and I saw that it was Yegor Yakovlevich. He nodded to me and, addressing the major, asked:

"Well, how goes it?"

"God knows. There doesn't seem to be anything in the chimney but it won't burn."

One might have thought that they had not only known each other for a long time but were both working on this troublesome stove together. We went into the house, which still reeked of smoke, and the major and Yegor Yakovlevich began talking about the stove. They kept referring to "him," meaning the unknown craftsman who had built it in the first place.



"Deserves a good thrashing for a job like this," the major suggested with gloomy conviction.

But the old stovemaker retorted pacifically: "Thrashing wouldn't do him any good. The point is he wasn't a stovemaker at all, must have been a cobbler or something. Linking up two chimneys, one from the range and the other from the stove, was a bit too much for his understanding." While he spoke, Yegor Yakovlevich drew his stick round the stove like a pointer, tapping it and leaving marks on the bricks. "Yes, just a cobbler, that's what he was."

He said this, as if comparing the trade of cobbler with something immeasurably more complex, with art or poetry, for instance.

The two stovemakers lighted cigarettes and went on discussing the matter at length. They were like doctors discussing a patient quite unconcerned by the presence of friends or relatives, who only understood half of their terminology, their unfinished phrases, their shoulder-shrugging and mysterious gestures.

"If you don't know how to do a thing, don't take it on," Yegor Yakovlevich concluded not without an allusion, so it seemed to me, to the present company.

The major did not take offence. "I'm not a stovemaker either," he said, "I had to have a stove for my own place so I made one. But when a man's in a jam like this," he nodded at me, "someone ought to help him, don't you think?"

"Of course," said Yegor Yakovlevich, gratified at the major's modesty. "But help him so that he won't have to ask for help any more."

"Yegor Yakovlevich!" I suddenly felt a fresh surge of hope. "Yegor Yakovlevich, that's quite true. What about it?"

And the major backed me up in the best possible fashion:

"I'd be your assistant, Yegor Yakovlevich. It wouldn't do me any harm to work under a master of the trade like you, really it wouldn't!" His mouth split open in that toothy smile and he covered it with the hand in which he held his cigarette. It is usually the plain folk who in the end find their way unerringly to the hearts of the most eccentric and aloof.

"Well, what am I to do with you? Assistance must be rendered," said the stovemaker and that "assistance must be rendered" sounded just like the resolutions that came down to us from district and regional headquarters: "assistance must be rendered" in this or that sphere.

Yegor Yakovlevich sat down on the chair in front of the stove just as the major had sat before him, and stared at it, muttering to himself: "Assistance. Assistance must be rendered. . . ." And with a sweep of his stick first in the direction of the major, then at the stove, he said: "Well, my friend, for tomorrow I want you to pull this stove down and pile the bricks neatly so none of them get broken. Understand?"

I noticed that he addressed the major familiarly, as if he already considered him his subordinate, although he must have noticed the major's tunic with its badges of rank hanging on the back of the chair; and in this too he was just like any of our district or regional chiefs.

The major said he would go up on the roof straight away and I, of course, expressed my readiness to help him, but Yegor Yakovlevich said there was no need.

"The stack's got nothing to do with it, the old one will do for us, only it's got to be propped up."

Neither I nor the major knew how chimney-stacks were propped up. So Yegor Yakovlevich gripped his stick at each end and explained the task in a very popular manner, again addressing his remarks only to the major:

"Take a couple of good beams, not less than two inches thick. Find the shoulders of the stack in the attic and get those beams propped under them. . . . You can prop up a whole stove like that if necessary. How would you pull down a stove on the ground floor if there's another one on top of it upstairs? Pull down both of them just for the sake of one? That's not the way. . . ."

And even from this first piece of practical instruction I could see that the old man had assumed his position of seniority not without reason. Before I had time to raise the question of payment he had departed with a nod, leaving rather a mess on the floor from his felt boots and home-made galoshes cut of the inner tube of a motor-car tyre.

By the evening the major and I had pulled down the stove, leaving the range untouched and propping up the stack as instructed. I personally was afraid that this propping up might lead to some disaster, but the major coped with the task with a confidence that belied his inexperience. As far as I could see, he was one of those excellent fellows you often find in the army, who will tackle any job

fearlessly, basing themselves on the well-known proposition that a man can do anything if he tries.

He made the props we needed out of a sixty-millimetre plank, by splitting it very neatly down the middle with an axe, which he then used like a plane to smooth down the two halves. With practised ease he freed the stove-doors and dampers from the bricks and the wire loops holding them in place. It was easy and pleasant to work with him: he wasn't overbearing with his superior skill, didn't lose his temper and his occasional jokes about my lack of skill were good-natured. We knocked together a box for the clay, so that we should have the clay and sand handy for work, and while we were changing our clothes, the kettle boiled.

"I could do with a cup of tea," the major agreed simply and we sat down together in the front kitchen, where it was cleaner. Over tea and cigarettes we got talking.

The major looked through my books, which I had brought in from the other room to save them from the dust, and, singling out a tattered volume of Nekrasov, remarked that it needed rebinding. And when I said it would be a difficult job to find a binder round here, he volunteered to rebind it himself and even to teach me how to do it. Of course it wouldn't be the same without a proper cutting press, he said, but the book would keep better. He loved books with that gentle respect and care that one finds only among the humblest readers. He went right through my tiny library, volume after volume, paying most attention to the poetry. I remarked that he must be fond of poetry, a thing which was not so common among people who didn't, so to speak, specialize in literature. He smiled shyly and with a certain defiance, emphasized by the joking arrogance in his tone, he said: "I write poetry myself. And publish it too!"

"That's splendid," I said and, not knowing what else to say, asked: "I expect you use a pseudonym, if you don't mind my asking? I don't think I have met your name in the press."

"No, I use my own name. But my stuff isn't published very often. Besides it only appears in the regional newspaper and *Soviet Soldier*. You don't get them round here."

Having said this he seemed to grow a little sad, and this prompted me to show a greater interest in his poetry. I asked him to show me some of it one day. He at once consented and began reciting it to me by heart.

Here I should mention that I don't refer to the major by name because his poems actually are printed and someone might find out that he and the hero of my story are one and the same person. And I shouldn't like that to happen at all, for I am describing him in full detail. I tried to invent a name for him in this story but I couldn't find anything that would suit him, so I have decided to leave him simply as "the major."

The major recited several of his poems, I don't remember them; they resembled so many other poems that appear in the papers about the virgin lands, soldiers' heroism, the peace movement, hydro-electric stations, dams, girls, little children growing up to live in the age of communism, and of course, poems about

poetry. And they were not simply similar by an inadvertent trick of imitation, which a poet would wish to avoid; it seemed as if every verse had been written for the express purpose of sounding like other people's, to conform to some ideal of what proper poetry was. I couldn't tell him this: I felt too well disposed towards him on account of his kindness, his comradely sympathy, his jack-of-all-trades ability and his quite unaffected modesty. I said something about a rather weak rhyme; it was quite an insignificant remark.

"No," he replied quietly, "it's not a matter of rhyme. . . . It's not the rhyming that bothers me. . . ." The reply left something sadly unstated; perhaps he himself knew something about his poems that I had not mentioned and, so it seemed to him, had failed to understand. And suddenly he began talking as if he were justifying himself and trying to answer in advance someone's objections to his poetry.

"You know I'm not such a fool as to think this has any real merit. But I'm not afraid of work, I'm stubborn as a mule and I can go without food or sleep to do something I want to do. I started writing when I was at the war, not while in action, of course, but during my hospital spells. A wound for me meant a new book of poems—a sort of creative leave." He laughed at his own joke and went on: "And I was lucky. I got wounded four times, not exactly lightly, but not very seriously, just about right for six weeks away from the front. Just enough time to have a good read and a scribble and then back to the front. And my luck held out. And the job I've got now gives me a clear day-off once a week. Then there are the evenings and nights. Frankly speaking, I just can't drop it, I must master a thing once I've started it. It's like this stove business. Do you think I ever learned to be a stovemaker, ever took a course in it? I had to build a stove, there was no one to do it for me, and, quite frankly, I couldn't have paid him if there had been—there are seven of us in the family, you know. So what did I do? I made it twice. First time I just did it roughly, heated it up, found out where the secret lay, then I took it to pieces again like we did this one—that one wasn't dry, of course—and then made a fairly good job of it. Yegor Yakovlevich might find something wrong with it, but it works." And again he gave a laugh, but rather an ambiguous one: there was a touch of bravado in it, but at the same time he was quite ready to dismiss the whole thing as merely an amusement.

In the course of our talk it turned out that we had been on neighbouring fronts and, relative though it was, this fact of being neighbours in the past brought us closer together, rather like two men attracted to each other by the equally relative fact of their coming from the same place. I walked home with him a little of the way, then came back and was a long time going to sleep in my cold and dusty room with its dismantled stove. It occurred to me that this pleasant man, busy with his army work and burdened with a large family, ought not to wear himself out trying to write poetry. It was clear to me that his verses were not really an expression of a deep inner need to say something that could only be said in verse. To write about the war as he did, he need never have spent four years at the front and have been wounded four times. In his verses about the children of socialism there wasn't a trace of the author—a father of five children;

in the poem about the virgin lands the only thing I could remember was the line: "virgin soil would yield to toil"; and finally, even in the poems about poetry, there was nothing but a repetition of the axiom that poetry is needed in battle and labour.

Perhaps he wrote all this because he knew he had the ability to master any new craft not only without special training but even without any special inclination. But no, the urge to write must have a very strong hold over him; one thing was certain, that much disappointment and bitterness awaited him on the path he had chosen.

I was awakened by a tap at the window above my head—the gentle but insistent tapping of a stick. It was Yegor Yakovlevich. I switched on the light—for it was still pitch dark—and let him in. He was wearing the same short coat with a fur collar and carrying the same pointer-like stick as before. He had no tools or overalls with him. While I dressed and tidied up, he smoked and coughed, blew his nose and spat, and examined everything that we had left in readiness for the job.

"Having a good rest, eh? A good rest!" he repeated between his coughing and nose-blowing.

Evidently he was very pleased that he had caught me in bed and forestalled the major. But the major did not keep the old man waiting more than ten minutes.

"Today's a holiday," he apologized with a smile as he unwrapped his overalls.

"For some people it's a holiday, but for you and me it's a working day," the old man responded coldly and his manner of address was formal, for the major was still in his army tunic with badges of rank on the shoulder straps. "It's a pity you didn't wet the clay overnight. We'll have a lot more mixing to do now. Wouldn't do any harm to have some warm water either. Not because we're afraid of spoiling our hands but to make the solution stick better." He always called the mixture of clay and sand the "solution," as though ranking it with cement. Coughing, he squatted down over the foundation of the ruined stove, measured it up with his stick and said:

"Four by four—that'll be quite enough."

"Here you are Yegor Yakovlevich," the major offered him a folding ruler. The old man waved his stick:

"I've got all the measures we need here. If you don't trust me you can measure it again yourself."

But no one did measure it again. It was decided that the foundation of the stove was to be four bricks long and four bricks wide. Yegor Yakovlevich transferred his stick to his left hand and with his right quickly arranged the bricks in a square, then stood up and pointed at them with his stick:

"That's the way you will lay them." Then he scooped a lump of the clay the major and I had mixed out of the box, squeezed it in his hand, frowned and tossed it back. "A little more sand. No, not that much! I said a little. That's enough. Now mix it up well."

We started work, and right from the beginning each of us found his own place. I mixed the clay and carried the bricks, the major did the brick-laying, and Yegor Yakovlevich, supervised everything, so to speak, using his stick as a pointer, now sitting down, now standing up, coughing and smoking all the time. Sometimes he seemed to forget the stove and plunged into a detailed and edifying discourse on the virtues of early rising, on the necessity of strict abstention from alcohol before work, on his cough, which was particularly bad first thing in the morning, and about the qualities of various kinds of bricks and many other materials. But I noticed that all the time he kept a vigilant eye on the work so that not a single brick went into place without close inspection and sometimes even an apparently casual tap from his stick. Yegor Yakovlevich was still wearing his warm coat, but the major and I in our old clothes were already warm from the work and mopping our brows and noses on our sleeves, for our hands were smeared with clay. Yegor Yakovlevich noticed this and did not miss the opportunity of giving us a little professional instruction on the matter.

"Stop for a breather, friend, have a smoke," he said. And with crafty generosity he offered the major his packet of cigarettes. The major straightened up and spread his arms helplessly. "Aha! Got nothing to take it with, eh? Got to go and wash your hands first? Is that it? Well, that shows you're not a stovemaker yet." He pushed a cigarette into the major's mouth, lighted it for him and went on: "Why should I have both hands in the solution? No, I only need one there, the right hand, and my left ought to be in the dry. Look." He pushed the major away with his stick, put it aside and, deftly turning up his sleeves, picked up a brick in his left hand, dipped his right in the pail of water, then scooped up a fairly large lump of clay. "Look! I place the brick with the left hand, then put the clay on and smooth it out with the right. See?" He quickly laid a row of bricks and, though it made him slightly out of breath, it was obvious that he used a lot less energy in doing so than the major. "Your left hand should always be in the dry. And it's not just a matter of being able to light up for a smoke and blow your nose without any trouble, the work's cleaner too. You want a nail—here's your nail, you want your glasses or anything else, you want to button something or unbutton it—it's easy." He showed us how he could do all these things with his left hand. "But your way you're stuck, like a scarecrow on a cabbage patch."

At this the stovemaker smiled, very pleased with his lesson and therefore prepared to allow his final words to be taken as a joke. I was very glad for the major: far from taking offence, he watched the demonstration with a delighted smile, covering his mouth with his hand which he kept at a distance so as not to smudge himself.

He made an attempt to adopt Yegor Yakovlevich's method, but soon found it necessary to transfer a brick from left hand to right, and had to give in.

"No, Yegor Yakovlevich, you'll have to let me do it my own way."

"Carry on, carry on," the old man agreed, "it doesn't all come at once. I've known plenty of stovemakers, quite good ones too, who work like you all their lives."

I am sure he would have been displeased and disappointed if the major had managed to acquire his style straight away. Perhaps the major realized this and did not try very hard. Then Yegor Yakovlevich, who was evidently tired of teaching us, placed two bricks on edge together and, holding his hand over them as if to pick them up, suggested to the major: "There, pick them up with one hand."

But the major burst out laughing and wagged his finger at Yegor Yakovlevich.

"Aha, that's an old trick, I know that one."

"You do, do you? Well, I should think so too. Some can't do it, you know. I've had them betting a bottle of vodka on it before now."

The trick, as they showed me, was to slip your index finger unnoticed between the bricks; then you could pick them up and move them about without difficulty.

The mention of vodka reminded me about breakfast, the more so since it was already quite light and nearly nine o'clock. I said I should have to go out for a while and went off to the station where I bought bread, sausage, one or two tins, and a bottle of vodka at a stall. On the way back I called in at Ivanovna's and she gave me a whole bowl of salted cucumbers, which had a pungent, appetizing smell of garlic and fennel. I was glad of the chance to stretch my legs and my back, which was already aching with the work, and I imagined the major would take a rest while I was away. But when I got back I saw that the work had gone on without a break and the new stove had risen to the height of the range; the doors had already been wired in, and Yegor Yakovlevich, no longer in his coat, but wearing a woollen jersey, was laying the first arch of the vault, while the major had taken my place and was handing him the bricks. They worked well together and the major could scarcely keep up with the old man's cracking pace. And they were arguing besides.

"A man ought to have only one talent," Yegor Yakovlevich was saying; true to his maxim, his left hand was still "in the dry."

His body in the tight jersey seemed almost puny in comparison with his big, long, heavy-wristed arms that reached out like the claws of a cray-fish. The argument must have developed out of what they had been talking about before I left—about craftsmanship and style of work, but by this time it had gone far beyond its original boundaries.

"Only one talent. And if you haven't got a talent for a thing, don't go in for it. Don't botch. That's what I always say, and you bear it in mind."

"But why only one?" the major argued calmly and with a touch of superiority. "What about the Renaissance? Leonardo da Vinci?"

Evidently it was the first time Yegor Yakovlevich had heard these words in his life and he was annoyed at his ignorance, but he was not going to give way.

"That we can't tell; you and I don't know what happened in those days."

"How do you mean, we don't know, Yegor Yakovlevich?" the major protested, looking round at me. "Everyone knows that Leonardo da Vinci was a painter, a sculptor, an inventor, and a writer as well. Ask our friend here."

I was obliged to confirm what the major said.

"Well, if he was, he was," the old man snapped, now that he was cornered. "But *when* was he? Centuries ago. When everyone was a jack-of-all-trades."

"Is that one at me?"

"No, I'm speaking in general. Things have a different development these days, different machines, everything's different, my lad."

I was quite amazed at Yegor Yakovlevich's historical way of looking at things and, saying so aloud, interrupted the argument and invited them to have a snack.

At table Yegor Yakovlevich flatly refused to drink.

"Later on, when we light her up. . . . You have one though," he told the major, "it won't do you any harm."

"But perhaps you'll have a drop too?"

"No, I can't. Not at work. I've got no one to do my thinking for me."

The major didn't insist, nor did he take offence.

"Well, I'll have a glass. Good health to you!"

The major and I had a drink. And our conversation again turned to literature. We touched on Mayakovsky, of whom the major spoke with adoration, quoting him by heart with such enthusiasm that he even forgot to cover his smile with his hand. And I wondered why a man with such a love for Mayakovsky should write such neat, tidy verses, imitating everything under the sun except his idol. But I didn't ask him about it and merely remarked that when studying Mayakovsky with my pupils I often come across words and turns of phrase directly opposed to the rules of our native tongue. The major protested warmly and half-annoyed, half-joking dubbed me a conservative and dogmatist.

Yegor Yakovlevich ate listlessly, sipped his tea and maintained a proud and remote silence. If I haven't heard anything about all this and don't know anything about it, his whole appearance seemed to say, with his grunting, and coughing, it's only because I've no use for it and it doesn't interest me and it's probably just a lot of nonsense anyway. But when we mentioned Pushkin, he said:

"Pushkin was a great Russian poet." And he said it as if he alone knew it, as if he had reached this conclusion by his own intellect and was the first man in the world to make the discovery. "A great poet!" He sighed, then screwing up his eyes, he too recited in an exaggeratedly expressive tone:

*Tell me, uncle, 'twas not in vain
That Moscow perished in the flame
And by the French was ta'en?*

"But that's Lermontov," the major laughed. The old man merely glanced sideways at him and continued:

*Some fights there were,
'Tis said none fiercer!*

"But that's Lermontov's *Borodino*," the major interrupted him with cheerful indignation and nudged me with his elbow.

*And not for nothing every Russian soul
Recalls the day of Borodino's fame!*

Yegor Yakovlevich pronounced the final words loudly and emphatically and even jerked his finger at the major, as if to show him he had known what it was all the time. Then he went on, determined not to be interrupted:

"And *The Battle of Poltava*: 'Glow the east with a new dawn. . . .'"

"Yes, that's Pushkin, you're right there," the major persisted. "Only it's part of a long poem called *Poltava*. But it's Pushkin all right."

"Did I say it wasn't Pushkin? Who else could have written a poem like that? Your Mayakovsky? Not likely, my lad."

"Mayakovsky's no longer living. No one knows what other poems he might have written."

"Pah!" The old man waved his heavy hand with the greatest possible scepticism. "Pah!"

"Well, you are a tough nut, Yegor Yakovlevich!" The major shook his head perplexedly and lifted the wrinkles on his forehead to the very roots of his thick black hair. "A real tough nut."

The old man apparently enjoyed hearing himself so described, but he immediately made it clear that this was no news to him either.

"Well, I'm past seventy, thank the Lord. When you've lived as long as I have, then you'll be able to talk." This referred not only to the major but to me and the whole of our generation.

But even now the major could not resist a moment of triumph.

"You may be a tough nut, but *Borodino* was written by Lermontov."

Yegor Yakovlevich said nothing and, having thanked me for the meal, rose from the table noticeably depressed. I think he himself knew he had made a blunder over *Borodino*, but to admit it would have been as sharp a prick as admitting that he had never heard of Leonardo da Vinci. I was sorry for him, as one is always sorry for an old man who suffers defeat at the hands of those who have the advantage of education and a youthful memory.

After breakfast the work went ahead even faster. Both stovemakers started laying the bricks: Yegor Yakovlevich on the kitchen side, the major in the back room, with me as their assistant. But the work proceeded in silence, save for a few remarks strictly concerning the job. Perhaps this was due to their recent argument, in which the major had obviously come off best, but perhaps it was because the work itself was becoming more and more intricate, now that various dampers, flues and vents had to be fixed and the range had to be connected up with the main flue—a matter requiring special concentration.

I did not try to draw the stovemakers out of their silence, for I had my work cut out to keep both of them supplied with bricks and clay. And when they took a rest, I made haste to prepare and arrange things so that I could manage

more easily. The body of the new stove had by this time risen to the hole in the ceiling, where the old stack was propped up; smaller than its predecessor, it looked rather smart and unusual. The heating surfaces of the stove and the "mirror," its wall facing into the other room, were all one brick thick. When Yegor Yakovlevich began making a kind of cornice for it under the ceiling, the stove became even more handsome and I could already picture it whitewashed: it would be quite an adornment to the room when I had tidied up and arranged everything for Lolya's arrival. But would it heat properly?

For the work at the top some sort of ladder was needed and we used stools and even the table, covering it as best we could with newspapers. Only Yegor Yakovlevich worked at the top and he was indeed king of the castle.

When he needed some bricks of a certain shape for the cornice, he would tell the major to shape them for him. The major spoiled one brick, then another, and looking very hot and uncomfortable, tried a third, but that, too, split into three pieces. I was expecting impatience and sarcastic remarks from Yegor Yakovlevich, but he seemed quite sympathetic over his assistant's failure:

"It's rubbishy brick. Call this brick? Here, let me have it."

He took the brick deftly in his left hand, which was still "in the dry," tossed it on his palm and with a light tap of the hammer, like cracking an egg-shell, split it in just the shape he needed. He did as well with the second brick, and the third, and all the bricks he needed, except that sometimes it took him one or two extra taps to produce the required result.

"That's the way to do it!" said the major. "That's the way, by jove it is!"

But the old stovemaker wished to be magnanimous. He attributed the enviable accuracy of his blows to the fact that the bricks were of different quality.

"Some of them are not so bad." And yet he could not resist a sly remark: "But what a run of duds you get sometimes. . . ."

The major and I burst out laughing and Yegor Yakovlevich laughed too, and I saw that he was more than compensated for his defeat in the other sphere. We both kept him supplied and were quite lost in admiration at the way he put in one brick after another under the old stack until



the props could be knocked out; and when they were, nothing terrible happened, and everything fitted like a glove, although Yegor Yakovlevich had not once used a square or ruler.

It was dusk by the time Yegor Yakovlevich climbed down coughing from his perch and the great moment of trying out the new stove arrived. I wanted to switch on the light but Yegor Yakovlevich protested.

"No need for it. Shan't we be able to see the fire?"

He settled himself in front of the stove, but this time on his knees instead of his haunches, sitting on the heels of his huge felt boots, like peasants usually sit in a sledge, or round a fire or common pot on the ground. Having arranged some shavings on the still damp grating, he struck a match, but did not apply it to them at once; instead he lit a ball of paper and pushed it into the ash-box underneath, and only then put the curling, almost burnt-out match into the shavings. The paper burnt up quickly in the ash-box, but the fire in the stove was slow to start—I scarcely breathed as I watched it—but in the end it caught. In dead silence the three of us watched it. Now it was blazing up, merrily licking at the bigger chips. Yes, but it had been like that with the old stove too at this stage—what would happen now? Yegor Yakovlevich began putting wood, arranging it as Ivanovna did; the fire gradually gained a firm hold on the logs; and so it went on, better and better. Yegor Yakovlevich rose heavily from his knees.

"Well, congratulations on your new stove," he said and began washing his hands in the pail.

So that was why he had not let me switch on the light—to make the fire look better in the stove. Yegor Yakovlevich was a poet in his trade.

When the major and I had washed and changed, I with some misgivings brought up the question of what payment Yegor Yakovlevich expected. "Everybody knows how much I charge," I remembered his words, but I was worried whether I had enough ready cash to settle up on the spot. The stove was burning splendidly, the big logs had been put on and they too had caught, and everything was going so well that I forgot to run out and look to see if the smoke was coming out of the chimney. It must be, if the stove wasn't smoking in the room.

"Oh, never mind that," Yegor Yakovlevich seemed to brush the question aside. "Never mind. . . ."

"No, no, Yegor Yakovlevich, please tell me what I owe you."

"The same as him, fifty-fifty," he replied in the same half-serious, half-joking manner, indicating the major. "We worked together. And you ought to get your share too: you helped us."

"Yegor Yakovlevich," the major intervened, "I'm here on quite a different basis, I'm not entitled to anything. I said in advance I wouldn't take anything, as I'm not an expert."

"And I won't take anything because I *am* an expert. See? So there's no more to say! But if you want to have a drink in honour of the new stove, let's have one."

I tried to insist that the payment would be no burden to me, that most of it would be met by the school, but at this Yegor Yakovlevich cut in sternly and touchily:

"Now, you're on the wrong track there, as if I would take money from our school. . . . I'm not as poor as all that, thank the Lord, and I'm not going to allow that kind of thing. . . ."

Perhaps this touchiness of his sprang from the fact that the major had again stolen a march on him by refusing payment in advance, but in any case I had to drop the subject.

The major heard all this and, when we sat down at the table, he gazed at Yegor Yakovlevich with an amused yet embarrassed look, and finally asked: "Yegor Yakovlevich, are you cross with me about something?" The question was unusual if only because it was put in the familiar form. "Perhaps I've done something to offend you?"

"No, why do you ask?" the old man said in surprise, and, as though he had never seen the major before, began staring at his tunic with its insignia of rank and treble row of medal ribbons.

"How might you have offended me? We did a good job together, there doesn't seem to be anything for us to quarrel about. . . ."

Now Yegor Yakovlevich was addressing the major formally; evidently he considered him no longer a subordinate, as he had been during the work.

"All right then. You're a good man, Yegor Yakovlevich, not to mention your skill at your trade. Let's have a drink—here's to you!"

"And the same to you!" They clinked glasses as though there had after all been something between them and now they were both glad to be reconciled.

At that point Ivanovna knocked at the door. She had seen the smoke coming out of the chimney. Fyodor limped in after her. They both drank with us, then praised the stove and praised Yegor Yakovlevich to his face. He drank three glasses, grew red in the face, and started boasting that he could build not only ordinary Russian stoves, but Dutch stoves and Swedish stoves and a round *burak*, and a fireplace and a steam-heating boiler, and that no one else could do it as well, because he had the talent for it and talent was a rare thing. Perhaps he became a little boring and too noisy, but when I wanted to pour him another glass he covered it firmly with his hand:

"Had my ration!" And began to take his leave.

I volunteered to see him home, not only because he was obviously slightly tipsy, but because I was still hoping to be able to get him to agree about some sort of payment. But he thanked me ceremoniously and said good-bye.

"See me home? I'm not a girl. . . ."

"Well, he is a tough nut, I must say!" said the major when he had gone.

We sat on together for a while talking. Ivanovna brought in some fresh wood for the next day and started tidying up the room. The stove began to dry out and even heated the room a little, and I began to feel so content that it seemed to me that I should never meet with any more trouble for the rest of my days.

Translated by Robert Daglish

Illustrated by Orest Vereisky

FOREST *and* STEPPE

At the end of May we decided to go fishing in the river Snezhet which goes by the nick-names of Snezhka, Snezhinka and Snezhok¹. It is a small stream that meanders here and there as the fancy takes it, making its way through meadows bordered by the woods. Sometimes it dives into a green tunnel of low-hanging oaks or again it runs into dense thickets of willows which are quite impassable, only to dart out into meadows frothy with grasses and flowers. These spots are astonishing for their beauty. As soon as you have turned off from the Bryansk-Orel highroad, which shimmers with heat and smells overpoweringly of asphalt, the road through the forest runs between such wonderful copses of pines and birches that you can only marvel how extraordinarily rich is nature's power of invention. In one place slender marble-white birches stand in close rows, twining their branches around one another, so that they make you think of some lovely festival. Each of them is white-skinned, young and shapely. Then suddenly they sway apart, breaking up their girlish dance, to reveal a small glade with all kinds of grasses and young pines looking like little girls in billowing skirts. And behind the glade you can see old pines with bronze trunks and branches like sunshades stand there whispering about something or other: but you can't make out, you can't quite catch what they are saying. However, it is certainly something very pleasant and soothing, for it sets in motion joyful thoughts which cheer your heart.

When your car reaches the heart of this pine forest, it rolls over a soft road covered with pine needles, a track that is now in the sunlight, now in the shadow, so that it looks like a striped tiger-skin that the successful hunter has spread out to dry. The air is different here, too. It is warm, motionless and tangy with resin. Gradually the track fades away and after running down a shelving sandy bank

¹ Diminutives of the word *sneg*, meaning snow.

comes to an end at a small bridge. Beyond is a damp meadow where carts pass only at hay-making time. To the right of the bridge is a deep pool. Pines and oaks look down from the tall bank at their reflections in the water. Behind the pines and oaks on the high bank are more pines and oaks, stretching away to the depths of the forest, and they look as though they are quietly jostling the lucky ones to make room for them on the bank, for they, too, want to gaze at their beautiful forms in the water.

When we drove along the track we first talked about fishing, but later we began to exclaim in amazement at the quiet, festive beauty of the forest which, though so near the town, still remained untouched and unspoilt. Finally we all fell silent, even the chauffeur who considered it his duty to express his displeasure at every rut and bump in the road. And when someone took out a cigarette, others protested that it was sacrilege to smoke.

In such a mood we arrived at the pool by the bridge. The car chugged up to the bank and came to a standstill, as if caught in a spell, and its headlights reflected the mirror-smooth water, the meadow with the first flowers and the green wall of the forest on the other side. We began to sort out our tackle, but for some reason or other the usual bustle and excitement were missing. My companions went off in all directions to find the places that suited them best, and I sat down on the little bridge over the silent stream. I could see the strangely broken reflection of an overhanging bush of broom and from time to time a series of little bubbles would rise up from the bed of the stream to pop out on to the surface; they would swim round on the spot for a moment and then roll away in different directions, like pearls on a sheet of glass. The fish were not biting, but this did not trouble me. I was so lost in my thoughts that when my old friend Pyotr Panteleyevich Timashev, a worker from the power station, climbed down from the bank and stood behind me, I did not notice him until he spoke.

"It's not a bad place for idle," he said. "But they won't bite. They've stopped."



Nikolai Gribachov was born in 1910 in the Bryansk region into a poor peasant family. His literary work dates from 1930, and five years later his first book of verse appeared.

During the Great Patriotic War he served in the forces, and continued writing. After the war he did a great deal of travelling. He is the author of several collections of verse devoted to the People's Democracies — Bulgaria, Hungary and Roumania. In 1947 he published the poem Spring in Victory Kolkhoz followed next year by The Bolshevik Kolkhoz. Both of these poems have won wide recognition among Soviet readers.

Gribachov is popular not only as a poet but as a publicist and prose-writer as well. He is editor-in-chief of the magazine The Soviet Union. In 1958 his collection of short stories August Stars came out, one of which we publish in this issue.

"Why, good day, Pyotr Panteleyevich! Are you out fishing too? What's made the ide go on strike?"

"That's their secret. They've been lying low for two days now. Shall we smoke?"

We each took a cigarette from his crumpled packet and lit up from the same match. I glanced at Timashev. He was dressed as all fishermen dress at that time of the year, in a padded jacket and duck trousers. On his head he wore a much battered cap of stout cloth which was probably kept with care for just such occasions. He had rubber boots which were neatly patched with little pieces of red rubber in several places. As far as I could remember he had been dressed in exactly the same way four years earlier when we had last met, only the things were just a little newer then. However, although he was clean shaven, it seemed to me that there were many new lines on his face and much more grey in his hair, despite the fact that he was hardly over fifty. He looked dull-eyed and worried.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "it's no good two fishing in the same spot. They say both courting and fishing are better done without company."

"It doesn't make any difference," I replied. "We're not likely to catch anything. The fish aren't biting. What's your news, Pyotr Panteleyevich?"

"There's something new every day. Things move slowly on, one after another, and when you look back, the new suddenly seems old, for you've already got used to it. Yes, life goes on."

"It's true, you keep to your old habits, you still come to the river."

"Yes, I come here. After work I have a meal and then I go into the forest or down to the river, I stroll about and I think about all kinds of things. It's a good spot here, quiet. Sometimes, when you sit peacefully on a tree-stump the birds settle on the branches all about you and call to each other with a host of varying trills, each showing off his own gifts. For they, like people, have different gifts. And then, I suppose they have their own thoughts too. You can see that life brings them hope and joy. But for me there is always a dark cloud wherever I go. Something nags at me, like a nail in your boot."

"Isn't your work going well?"

"Oh, there's nothing wrong with that. Things are all right there. They've put in new machines and it's even become more interesting. But we had some trouble at home."

I did not like to ask him what had happened, and he remained silent, glancing sideways as though wondering if he should go on. Finally he sighed and said:

"You remember my girl?"

"Of course, I do."

I had met his daughter in a somewhat unexpected fashion. It was the end of July and the past week had been unusually hot: the wind blowing in from the fields brought with it pillars of dust which it whirled around the streets of the town; the walls of the houses became very hot and even in the buildings that the sun never reached the air was close and oppressive. At last Saturday came and we rushed off to our Snezhka where we spent the night by the camp fire and the next morning got up to fish and bathe. But at midday—we noticed nothing at first for it was



hidden by the woods—a storm-cloud rolled up and burst over the spot with a cold, noisy downpour, the like of which had not been seen there for many a year.

Lightning flashed and thunder clapped almost without a break. Overhead in the fast-deepening dusk the tree-tops swayed with loud squeaks and groans; the wind whirled the rain into spirals and lashed it down obliquely in all directions. As soon as the first raindrops fell we took shelter under the spreading branches of an old oak-tree, but when flashes of lightning began to split the slate-grey sky asunder we went out into the meadow and got drenched to the skin.

The storm passed over, but there was no hope of getting dry, for the sun did not come out. We decided to make for the village by walking straight through the forest. We were soon quite lost amid the copses of young firs and birches. Here and there old paths wandered through the forest, so overgrown with grass as to be hardly noticeable, but they crossed each other full of turnings and loops so that it was quite impossible to make out where they led. It may be amusing to watch a group of grown-up people tramp around in a forest, always coming back to the same spot: but it is not so funny from the point of view of those whose clothes are soaking wet and sticking to their backs, whose matches and tobacco have become a sticky mess and who, on top of everything else, are beginning to feel very hungry.

We spent about two hours like this when, suddenly, in a birch copse—the very copse which, we discovered, bordered the road—we saw a girl with blue eyes and fair plaits crowning her head; she was as slender as the young birches by which she stood, but tanned by the sun. She had a mushroom-basket on her arm and wore a serious, expectant look, yet I was prepared to swear that there was a twinkle in her eye. We said good-day and asked her if we were far from the village.

“It’s just a stone’s throw away.”

“You waited here till the storm was over? Didn’t you get soaked?”

“I sheltered under a hayrick. Look, that one over there in the clearing.”

“You might have been killed!”

“Oh, no! The rick is tiny, and the pines are tall.”

The girl was Timashev’s daughter Svetlana, a medical student. She took us along the path to her father’s house, helped her mother to clean the fish, fry the mushrooms and cook all kinds of dishes for the unexpected visitors. With us was a young journalist who had not been working on a newspaper long and was, indeed, hardly out of university. He was a saucy city lad, but quite helpless in the forest or by the river, quite incapable of making a fire or of holding a fishing rod the proper way. The first time he was asked what colour were buckwheat flowers, he hastily marshalled in his mind all his slender reserves of agricultural knowledge and replied “blue”—with the result that the whole office split their sides with laughing. An inveterate leg-puller from the cultural department advised him to go fishing with mushrooms for bait; the lad believed him and spent a whole day trying to tempt perch with a toadstool.

While we were on our way to the Timashevs’ this journalist, whose name was Vova Zharkov, kept his nose pointed in Svetlana’s direction all the time as though his nose were a compass needle and Svetlana the magnetic pole. Vova even volun-



teered to help clean the fish, but when he started on the job he immediately drove a splinter under his nail, and walked around for a week afterwards with his finger bound up like a baby doll, for Svetlana had applied bandage liberally. During the few hours we spent there, Vova Zharkov turned on all his barrage of flirting methods, including the most subtle flattery. The girl screwed up her blue eyes with pleasure (even grandmothers are not averse to praise), chuckled in encouragement—but refused to go out and “get a breath of fresh air” on the edge of the forest.

Afterwards we learnt that he went to the Timashevs’ four times that summer, wrote Svetlana letters, and told the office typists in confidence of the change that was soon to take place in his life; but no change took place. We long remembered the blue-eyed beauty of the forest who was so efficient and good-hearted, who continually had a smile on her fine-drawn lips as though, apart from the splendid world about her, she bore within herself her own particular world where the spring sun shone continually, a world where only joyous, serene people lived. . . .

“What happened to your daughter?” I asked Pyotr Panteleyevich as he stood there twirling his fishing-rod in his hands, uncertain whether it were worth while unreeling it or not.

“She’s left us.”

“Children always do that. They go away and come back again.”

“Well, that’s so, but I haven’t much hope.”

“Where’s she gone?”

“To the virgin lands.”

“Yes, that’s a serious business. Was she so determined to go that she left her mother and father and such a beautiful spot?”

“Yes, she was quite decided. I can’t understand it myself. Perhaps I’m getting old.”

“Isn’t she homesick?”

Pyotr Panteleyevich thought for a moment, as though he were getting the facts in order and sorting out the essential ones.

“Who knows? It’s difficult to say. In the winter her mother sent her a parcel of dried mushrooms from the forest. My girl wrote back saying that she had shared them out with her comrades; they said they were excellent, and while they ate them she told them about our forest and about our Snezhinka here. You never happened to hear her, but she’s the queen of story-tellers, got it from her granny, I suppose, and she tells you all the smallest details. So she wrote that she talked and talked and then they decided to plant their own little wood around a lake. Do you think it’ll grow there?”

“It probably will.”

“So you see how things are. I thought that perhaps. . . . Well, Mother is as pleased as anything that the mushrooms were appreciated. Just like a woman. But I’ve been thinking of something else.”

“What?”

“I think it means that they have really settled down there and don’t intend to come back! If they get a new flat, it’s not so final. There are flats in other places

too, and you can change. But if they're planting woods or gardens, that means it's for ever, for they won't be able to leave. The trees you plant yourself are like your children. You want to go away but they won't let you. Their small hands clutch at you, appealing to your paternal heart. Nobody knows when the young wood they've planted there will grow up or what it will be like. But it's struck a splinter into my heart, and you can't get it out, however hard you try. . . . You've got a bite, I think. Don't let him get away!"

My float had been jumping about on the surface for a long time and then it began to sink under the water. I drew in my line, and found I had hooked a small carp, but then I decided that anyway there would not be enough for fish soup, and threw it back. It fell into the dark water by the planks of the bridge, flashing with silver, until it swam out of sight. The sun was going down behind the jagged line of bluish trees; at first all the river lay in a greenish shadow, then the sky overhead seemed to glow warmly with the sunset and the water also became a brighter and brighter pink. Pyotr Panteleyevich did not unreel his line, but sat there, staring at my float dancing on the surface.

"We won't have any luck today," he said finally. "Perhaps in the morning, but there'll be none this evening. The fish feel the chill of the night."

"The fish can go to the devil. I've been sitting by the water, and that's good enough for me. A friend of mine, just my age, died of a heart attack a little while ago. They said he was overworked. But I think he got too little fresh air, never went out into the woods and the fields, never went walking in the meadows. Now, what about your daughter, Pyotr Panteleyevich?"

"It looks as if it's all settled. I suppose she'd probably have got married anyhow, and gone away somewhere or other, wouldn't she? Today young people's ways take them all over the place, and how can you keep them at home? And then, there'll be a new situation."

"What kind?"

"A grandson."

"But you never mentioned a grandson before."

"No, for there isn't one yet. But the girl is pretty and healthy, so what can you expect? The only thing that can happen is that there'll be a grandson."

Timashev sighed slowly and seemed to hesitate, not sure whether to go on with the conversation or not. But he could not stop himself and he went on:

"You see, I don't want to get upset all over again, but. . . . My grief goes back a long, long time, and you can't get rid of it, like you do when you throw back small fry. Before the war I had two children, Svetlana and Seryozha. He was four when the fascists came to our parts. Our village is right on the edge of the forest, so they set up a strong garrison there and wouldn't let a living soul go. They were afraid of the partisans. The people suffered terribly from hunger, inconceivable hunger. They ate the bark of trees. By the time our soldiers arrived over half the people had died and as for those that remained, some could just get to their feet, while others didn't move at all, just lay in a stupor, awaiting death. I arrived home from the partisan unit the next day. Seryozha just half-opened his eyes once—I think he knew me—he tried to say something, but he couldn't, he had no

strength left. . . . I laid him in a coffin I'd made from the ceiling boards, for there was nothing else to make it from, the fascists had taken all the wood for trenches where it rotted away. I carried the coffin in my arms to the pine copse on the knoll where the sand is dry. . . . I buried my son there and half my heart with him. . . . I used to go into the woods and talk to him, trying to get him to understand how it was that I had not been able to save him, had not been able to arrive in time. . . . It was only later, when Svetlana grew up, that my heart became a little lighter, and the idea occurred to me that I might have a grandson. Whenever I walk through the forest or by the river, I can imagine him running about on his chubby feet, happily collecting mushrooms or blackberries, chasing after the birds and listening to the pines, for these old pines are alive in the wind, they talk to each other and sing a long, quiet kind of song. And when I see a seedling thrusting its way up from the earth, through the pine needles and the dead grass, I say: 'Grow, my little one, grow fine and tall, and then you'll make a fishing rod for my grandson.' And if I happen to catch a tiny fish on my hook, I throw him back and tell him: 'Swim away, live to become big and strong, my grandson will catch you and what a happy day that will be!' And now it seems to me that all this will never be. Here I go walking about the woods, running away from my thoughts. But they come after me, they come after me. I never speak to my wife about it. I don't want to worry her, but my thoughts torment me all the time."

"Your grandson will grow up out there just as well, Pyotr Panteleyevich."

"Have you ever been there? You don't know by any chance what the place is like?"

"The land stretches away far and wide, like a sea, Pyotr Panteleyevich. But the real sea is all green and there you see colours like patchwork. There's a lot of sun, more than we have here."

"Then the climate, is it healthy there?"

"Yes, very. But why shouldn't you go there yourself? In a year or two they'll have finished building, they'll feel quite at home, it'll be fine."

"I thought about it. . . . But what about my son? He would be left here alone in the pine copse."

"In that case, your daughter can come for a holiday and bring your grandson. You'll wander around with him and show him how beautiful it is here."

"I thought of that, too. But it's not as easy as it seems. They say old women love their grandchildren more than their own children. I can't explain why it should be so, but I'm sure there's a great deal of truth in it. You just think what will happen. He'll come here and win a place in your heart, and then go back out there again. What will come of it is that I'll worry about him at nights, wondering if he's well or if he's coughing and sneezing, if he got his feet wet and if he's doing well at school. In the summer storms, in winter, the forest rustles and moans and seems to scold me angrily: What an old fool you are, an old fool, goodness knows what you are clinging to, letting your child be torn away from you. That's how it is."

Dusk was falling, first touching and darkening the forest which seemed to have been dipped in the shadowed water, enfolding the river banks and the meadow.

We went back to the car and began gathering dried pine branches. Our chauffeur switched on the headlights so that we could see to peel the potatoes and the white beams swept over the river and the meadow to the far edge of the forest. Moths and midges flashed and danced like sparks in the light: a startled bird scuttled noisily out of a clump of willows and darted away into the shadow. Pyotr Panteleyevich deftly with his sharp pocket knife sliced off the thin peelings. Now and then, when he had peeled a potato and thrown it into the pot he would become thoughtful and gaze across to the little meadow where a smoky mist was already creeping over the low-lying parts.

"I suppose in the steppe you can see the lights of a car from far, far away," he remarked, after one such pause. "From miles and miles away."

"Probably for ten miles or so."

"Just think of that. That's open spaces for you! The lights must look like stars at first, then like a white path. Interesting! I dare say there are lots of wild things, too, all kinds of hares and rabbits, and so on?"

"Yes, of course. Life goes on everywhere."

The journalist Vova was the last to come back to our camp. With time he had grown up and become tanned, he had learned a good deal but had become quite unbearable as a fishing companion, because by the water he completely forgot everything else. When there was kindling to gather or supper to cook he was nowhere to be seen; when it was time to leave we had to shout and call him for an hour before he heard us. Pyotr Panteleyevich looked at him for a long time, then recognized him and, when he knew who it was, said reproachfully:

"Oh, it's you, the unlucky swain. You didn't justify our hopes!"

"Me? Why?" said Vova in embarrassment.

"Yes, why! To tell you the truth, I wouldn't have let you marry Svetlana, I thought you were too flighty. But you might have talked her into it yourself. It mightn't have been so bad, after all."

Zharkov blushed, but he scarcely understood the real meaning behind the reproach. He seemed to think the older man was making fun of him. Then we ate supper round the fire and the conversation turned to everyday topics. When we had finished and smoked our cigarettes, we raked together dry pine needles for a bed and covered them with a tarpaulin for a blanket. The air grew cooler and the lingering, delicate scent of flowers grew sharper.

"It's always like this before the dew falls," Pyotr Panteleyevich explained as he sat by the fading fire. "It doesn't happen in the steppe."

"But it does, you know," I contradicted him. "After a dry day in the steppe there's such a scent that our forest could not compare with it."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, it's true. You can read about it for yourself in books."

"I've read such things, of course. I've bought many books of that kind. It's interesting, only when you hear it from a person then it seems much more real. Well, sleep well. I'm off now."

"Stay and spend the night here, there's plenty of room."

"I'm sorry, I can't. The old woman would worry. Call in tomorrow on your way home."

"Thanks, we will."

He got up, finished his cigarette in silence, threw it into the ashes of the fire, took up his tackle and went off. He soon melted into the darkness, but we could hear the hazel twigs snapping as he brushed past the bushes. The forest grew utterly still, there was not a sound to be heard. We lay looking up at the tops of the pines above, very faintly outlined against the dark sky, and over our heads the stars looked like thick clusters of blueberries.

"Why is he always talking about the steppe and the steppe and the steppe?" asked Zharkov.

"Svetlana has gone to the virgin lands."

"Good heavens!"

"Is it really so surprising?"

"No, not really. Is he going there too?"

For a moment I imagined Pyotr Panteleyevich walking in the darkness through the copses of pine and birch. It was obvious that he was deeply attached to the place where he had grown up and spent the best years of his life. He loved the paths strewn with pine needles where his fair-haired daughter had played barefoot, and the pine copse where his son lay buried. And now the vision of the far-off steppe was, almost despite his will, creeping into his heart, settling there, and was even fast becoming the master, for he heard, somewhere far away, the beat of his grandson's chubby feet. Forest and steppe, the past years of his life and the years to come, battled in his heart night and day, giving him no respite. Here were the roots of his family and there, thousands of miles away, new shoots were sprouting. One could do nothing about it. But who could tell what the future held? So, not wishing to go into details, I answered Zharkov shortly:

"He didn't say."

Translated by Phyl Griffith

Illustrated by Orest Vereisky



Akaki Belashvili

THE WHIMS OF FORTUNE

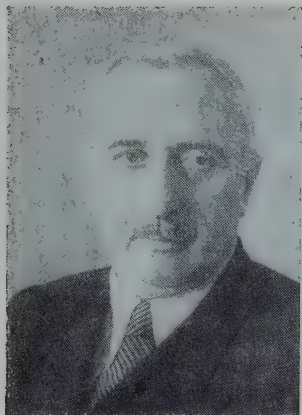
Karaman Mkheidze walked absent-mindedly along the country road lost in thoughts of his own. He knew the road by heart, every inch of it. From Chaly to Pitsunda and from Laftary to Utviri there wasn't a pathway on that road over which he hadn't some time led a stolen horse. He sighed as he recalled the good old days. There wasn't another horse thief like him in the whole country! What was Matsi Khvitia¹ compared to him? The devil himself couldn't hide a horse as cunningly as Karaman Mkheidze! When a horse disappeared and was never found again everyone knew it was Karaman's doing. But there was nothing they could do about it, for who would dare lift a hand against Karaman Mkheidze?

Yes, those were fine, rollicking times for Karaman.

Now they had introduced a horse census. All the money they were wasting on that census! If Karaman had that money he'd be a rich man. He could tell them without any census about every horse for miles around—how old it was, what colour, what brand it bore. He knew their whole pedigree and how many times each mare had foaled. Why, he even knew which were in foal now. Everything there was to know about them he knew.

He sighed again. Times had changed. It was more than ten years now since he had had to give up his trade. Couldn't get your hands on an old nag now, let alone a nice trotter. It used to be an easy matter to steal a horse and cover up your

¹ Matsi Khvitia—the famed horse-thief hero of Anton Purtseladze's novel of the same title.



Akaki Beliashvili was born in 1903. A graduate of the Tbilisi Polytechnical Institute, his literary work dates from 1920. His first volume of stories and reportage appeared in print in 1933.

Beliashvili's tales and stories, the result of a quarter of a century's labour (1933-1958), comprise 6 collections, and reflect present-day Soviet life as well as life in pre-Revolution Georgia.

Among his major works, especially popular are the historical novels: *The Imps* (1943-1948) which is devoted to the Georgian poet of the 18th century Vissarion Gabashvili, and *The Golden Tent* (1952). In 1953 Beliashvili published the first part of his book *Rustavi*, which deals with the life of steel workers in present-day Georgia. This was followed in 1954 by *The Mountain Pass* which is devoted to the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945.

tracks, but just try it now! Serious folk, these Bolsheviks, and they run things differently. Now all that remained to Karaman was fond memories. The flag of his trade was in tatters.

Preoccupied with thoughts of this kind, he trudged along. He was topping the crest of Nabardev Hill when he saw grazing at the edge of the forest a mule, round and smooth as an egg.

Instinctively, Karaman glanced about him, then, seeing no one, took a closer look at the mule. The mule paid no attention and just went on nibbling at the grass. Karaman came closer, affectionately patted its rump, inspected its legs and stepped back, overcome with admiration.

Bless me! what a gentle and intelligent mule, he thought to himself. So sleek and well-fed, and not old either. Not that age matters much in a mule, but still. . . .

The mule meanwhile just swished off the flies and nibbled at the grass as placidly as a sheep. Karaman glanced about him again. His heart beat faster. He couldn't remember another animal that had just asked to be stolen as this one did!

The thought no sooner flitted through his mind than the old passion for horse-stealing, forgotten these ten years, reawakened.

"Oh, accursed mule, may the wolves devour you! What are you doing to me? Why do you force me to steal? Why do you rend my heart? Shall I go away and leave you here? But if I do my heart will burst this very night! For ten years I haven't stolen a single animal. Everyone believes I've become an honest man and respects me. Must I disgrace my good name because of you! No! Stay here, murderer of my heart!"

Karaman turned and went back to the road while the mule continued nibbling placidly at the grass. Before he had gone five steps, however, his knees gave way and he turned round to face the animal.

"What are you standing there for? You wretch, you homeless tramp! Oh, why doesn't someone come by and interfere?" Karaman looked round helplessly. "It would quieten my heart! I'll sit down and wait a bit. Perhaps someone will come along."

He sat down, wiped away the perspiration and lit a cigarette. As ill luck would have it, however, no one appeared on the road. The mule continued to graze. Once or twice it stretched out a foreleg and rubbed its muzzle against it. It looked round at Karaman, as if it had only just noticed him, and went back calmly to its nibbling.

"Have you no fear of God, you villain?" Karaman burst out. "Mocking at me, are you, because I sit here like a beggar, looking at you from afar? May you cry Karaman's shame to the whole world if he lets you laugh at him! You're making me steal you. It's your fault, not mine!"

Jumping up he cut some long switches, twisted them into something like a rope, and out of this and his belt fashioned a bridle of sorts. Then he walked up to the mule with it.

The mule just continued to nibble at the grass.

"Run, you devil! Can't you see I've a bridle in my hands? Run, I tell you! You won't, eh? Well, then, what can I do? Just look at him! Toss your head, at least, when I put the bridle on you! It's not natural to be such a lamb! Well, it's your own look-out. As you like. Off we go, then!"

In a twinkling Karaman was on the animal's back and riding into the forest.

"Ah, what a mule! What a sweet mule! He's worth 5,000 at least. The money's as good as in my pocket. Never in my life have I seen such a lamb. And his gait, just look at his gait. And so sleek! True, he has made me sin, but for such a beauty it's no sin to sin!"

Whenever Karaman had stolen a horse there was always the problem of where to hide it. In this matter he had rules of his own: if he planned to take the animal to Abkhazia he would ride in the opposite direction, as if going to Kakhetia; if he planned to sell it in Racha he would pretend he was riding towards Bagdadi.

Now too he kept to this practice. Instead of heading straight for the road he turned off into a forest path; he knew from experience that the byways were safer and got you where you wanted sooner than the main road. The path he took—he knew it well—went through a thicket of prickly bushes, then past an abandoned winter trail no one had used for years, and then down to the Dzevrov Bridge. The chief thing was to get across the bridge. Beyond the bridge he was safe.

When a theft was planned in advance Karaman was always easy in his mind, for then he had thought out beforehand by what route to make his getaway. But if he nabbed a beast on the spur of the moment, the first necessity was to discover who owned it, so as to know from what direction pursuit might come. If you did not know who the owner was you might run into a hundred mishaps.

And so, as he rode through the forest, Karaman tried to figure out who the mule's owner might be.

"Who do you belong to? Answer me!" he began with a personal interrogation. "Are you deaf, or what? Who fed and watered you? Where is your stable? Hm, not a word from you. No brand on you, and I see no way of telling. I must have got rusty in ten years of idleness. Now, who can you belong to? There's a riddle! . . . Ah, wait! I think I have it! I've not lost all my cunning yet. I know you, my friend. You are Father Ambrosi's mule. Well, well, that priest has done well

for himself, hasn't he? Raising himself such a beauty! Hasn't given up his trade, has he, the bearded devil! Times have changed but what's that to him! Most of the priests round here cut off their long hair long ago, but not him, the godless creature! What does he want with a mule nowadays? No church weddings, no christenings, no wakes for him to go to, but he won't part with you, like an old nobleman who won't part with his dagger! Anyone can see you have no work to do—you're as plump as Prince Tsereteli's widow!"

Musing like this, Karaman descended the woody slope of the hill and reached the bank of the Prona River. The mule trotted along briskly, as if pleased to have someone on its back. Karaman's delight knew no bounds.

"What a lovely creature! In all my life I never handled a mule like you. A train? No, not a train. An automobile? No, not an automobile. Why, it's an insult to compare you to those. An aeroplane, that's what you are, an aeroplane! You don't trot, you fly! If it weren't that you were stolen I wouldn't part with you for anything in the world!"

The mule pushed through the bushes so adroitly, wove its way among the lianes so skilfully and kept going so energetically that its speed never slackened for a moment.

"Aren't you ashamed, shameless one, that it will make me cry to sell you? A man crying? What will people say when they see me? Aren't you ashamed? No?"

The path ended at Dzevrov Bridge. Beyond the bridge no one would pursue Karaman, for there were roads branching off into all directions, and no one could know which one he had taken. With hopes Karaman rode up to the bridge, all ready to heave a sigh of relief on the other side, when his aeroplane-like mule came to a sudden stop.

"What's the matter? Tired?" Karaman asked ingratiatingly. "We'll just cross to the other side and then you'll have a rest. The grass over there is so tasty that I do believe I'll enjoy a nibble of it myself."

And he raised the switch delicately, certain that in a few seconds he would be on the other side, in the thick forest out of sight of prying eyes.

The mule did not budge. Karaman looked at it in surprise.

"Hey! What's the idea of stopping? Ah, I see. Decided to have a little joke, have you? Don't, I beg you in the name of your mother! This is no time for jokes. Someone may catch up with us any minute. Come, let's cross the bridge. Come!"

The mule did not even twitch its ears. It placed its forefeet against the rail with the obvious intention of staying put.

"Now, now. Don't make me shout out here in the open. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Didn't I sing your praises all the way?" Karaman coaxed, tickling the mule lightly with his heels.

The mule stood stolidly, swishing off the flies with its tail.

"Come on! Move! Don't think I can't get mad!" Karaman raised his voice. "Don't anger me, if you love me. Come, now!"

But the mule had decided to be stubborn. It twitched its ears and swished its tail still harder.

"Do you want me to spend the night here? . . . Drawn back your ears, have you? Who do you think you are? I once whipped Prince Tsulukidze's horse, I'll have you know! Get a move on, I tell you!"

Karaman lost patience and gave the mule a hard lash with the switch. The mule snorted angrily and pushed its feet still harder against the railing.

"Thankless wretch! I didn't want to quarrel with you, but you're making me. Get a move on, I say, or else you'll get a hiding that I wouldn't wish my worst enemy. Giddap!"

He lashed away at the mule for about ten minutes, but the animal only got more stubborn, refusing to budge an inch. Realizing that whipping would get him nowhere Karaman began to coax again:

"Look what you're doing to me. Have you no shame? I'm a proud man and here you're disgracing me before the whole world. Come, cross the bridge. You needn't be afraid. You won't fall through. I'll go first, if you like. Why, trucks drive over this bridge, and you're afraid it won't hold you!"

Karaman dismounted and began to pull at the makeshift bridle. He shouted and cajoled by turns; it was no use. The mule would not budge.

Karaman's temper rose. He stared at the mule fiercely, like a cock looking for a fight.

"You think I'm your long-haired priest, that you can make a laughing stock of? My name's not Karaman Mkheidze if I don't get you across this bridge. You don't know me yet, I see."

Glancing about him, he saw a stout stick lying in the road and snatched it up. The mule promptly took measure to prevent him from mounting. It began to kick and prance. But Karaman was not one to be frightened off by such childish tricks. He managed after a while to struggle on to the animal's back, and lifted his stick.

"Watch out now!" he cried, and laid on the stick with all his might across the animal's rump.

The mule groaned and kicked up its hind legs.

"Get a move on!" Karaman struck again.

The mule groaned again, but did not budge.

Karaman was good and mad now and hit away at the mule for all he was worth.

The mule squealed like a pig and kicked, determined to throw him off. At last, unable to stand the pain any longer, it swung round so violently that Karaman almost fell off and went tearing back at a furious pace. Uphill and downhill, across ditches and through woods—it was all one wild gallop. All Karaman could do was to keep his eyes from being gouged out by jutting branches.

The harder Karaman tried to stop the mule the faster it went. At last he managed to tuck his toes under the mule's forelegs and, more secure now, breathed easier.

"Run, run, you fool!" he muttered. "You'll have to stop anyway. You'll get tired some time. You won't get away from me!"

Suddenly the mule lightly cleared a crumbled stone wall, swung into the backyard of a house and stopped in front of the porch.

The door opened and Father Ambrosi came out, peering enquiringly at Karaman.

Karaman sat there dumbfounded.

The priest ran down the rickety steps and came up to him.

"Is that you, Karaman?" he mumbled.

Better that I was not Karaman, the horse-thief thought to himself.

"This is good of you, my son. Where did you find the accursed beast? Been gone a month. We've looked for him everywhere. Get down, get down. He's worn you out, I can see. You look all in."

Karaman got down and stared at the priest with the blurred gaze of a defeated general. True, it was a relief to be out of danger of being caught with a stolen mule. But a feeling of shameful defeat oppressed him nonetheless.

"Where did you find the rascal?" Ambrosi jabbered delightedly. "Look how sleek he's grown on his own! However did you manage to make the stubborn beast come home? Amazing! . . . Thank you, my son! I'll never forget this service!"

Karaman glanced at the mule and said nothing. He did not rightly know himself how the thing had happened.

And the mule went on nibbling placidly at the grass and swishing its tail to drive off the bothersome flies.

*Translated by Mary Mackler
Illustrated by Pyotr Pinkisevich*



Vladimir Soloukhin



VLADIMIR

Woodlands

Vladimir Soloukhin was born in 1924 in a Russian peasant family. His childhood was spent in the village of Alepino, Vladimir region, on the picturesque bank of the Vorsha River. At the age of 14 he entered a Mechanics Technical School. The urge to write came at about the same time, and his first verses made their appearance in the local regional newspaper.

After demobilization (he had been called up in 1942), he entered the Gorky Literary Institute. His first volume of verse, *Rain in the Steppe*, came out in Moscow in 1953.

As a constant contributor to the weekly journal *Ogonyok* Soloukhin has done a great deal of travelling over his own country and abroad. As a result, in 1955 there came out *The Birth of Zernograd*, a story devoted to the development of virgin soil, and in 1955—*Over the Blue Seas*, a small book describing the author's visit to Albania. These were followed the same year by two more books—a collection of sketches entitled *The Gold Mine* and a collection of poems, *Rent Grass*.

In 1957 Soloukhin published a lyrical diary which he had written during a one-and-a-half month's trip on foot over Vladimir region. This work is devoted to the Vladimir-Suzdal countryside scenes, to the streams, fields and villages so dear to the poet's heart, to his countrymen who live and toil there.

Below we publish a few chapters from this diary.

Fair art thou, Volodimir Land!
(From an ancient manuscript)

When you've been travelling in distant parts, you simply have to boast a little to the folks at home, and perhaps even draw the long bow. You may not go so far as killing seven ducks with one shot, but throwing a Nenets noose round the neck of a snow-white swan—yes. You describe how its great thrashing wings beat the dark mirror of the tundra lake, shattering it into a thousand glittering fragments. And as you add detail to detail, you enjoy the expression on your listeners' faces, that look of belief tinged with doubt. Travelling would certainly lose half its charm if you could not tell people about it afterwards.

One day, after I had been boasting something like this to one of my friends, I felt it time to change the subject and asked, "Well, what about you? What's new? Where've you been all this time?"

"Oh, us—we don't go catching swans. I've been about here and there, just ordinary trips—incidentally, I've been in your parts, Vladimir way. Eh, but there are some pretty spots there! Remember, just when you're leaving Kameshki, there's that glade on the right...."

He began talking about that glade as though he had only just been there. I felt myself getting red until my very ears burned, but I was ashamed to break in with, "I've never been in Kameshki and I've never even seen that glade of yours."

Of course, another friend had to pile it on.

"We got to Yuryev-Polsky early in the morning. There'd just been a shower of rain, the ground was steaming a bit and the grass sparkled. And there was that quiet little town of wooden houses with the smoke rising from the chimneys, and a river flowing through, so full it looked as though it was going to spill right over. And yellow water-lilies growing in it, right in the middle of the town, a blaze of gold along the water in the early quietness of morning. Here and there women with sturdy gleaming legs were washing linen on small stages jutting into the water. And the cocks were crowing. That's Yuryev-Polsky for you! And that river—what's it called?—Kolochka?"

"Yes, that's right, Kolochka."

"No, it's not, either, it's Koloksha. Well, and they say that river, the Koloksha, it's stiff with fish."

By this time I was not only blushing, I was ready to sink through the floor. Kolochka, indeed! All right, I might never have been in Kameshki, but not to know that Yuryev-Polsky stands on the Koloksha, the same Koloksha that flowed six versts from my doorstep! Yes, and Yuryev-Polsky itself was only thirty versts away. But I'd never been there, never seen it, knew nothing about it. I could talk about the Polar regions, the Baltic and the Adriatic, but it needed other people to tell me of the beauty of my own parts.

That was how there rose in me a healthy envy mingled with the sense of moral duty to my Vladimir region, than which there is none lovelier on earth (this I knew well) because there is none closer to my heart.

I felt an irresistible urge to see it all, to plunge into it and absorb it in every detail.

So—not to waste more words—I made up my mind to devote the coming summer wholly to the Vladimir region. The only question was—how? What kind of vehicles should I use?

I have tried many kinds of transport in the course of my life; I have travelled on goods trains (on the bumpers), in passenger trains, in first-class compartments with every comfort, on narrow-gauge railways at a speed of ten kilometres an hour, on locomotives that had no train at all, on the tender (with the engine running backwards) and in the engine-driver's cabin, by overhead cable-way (and the

car stuck just where the drop was deepest), on reindeer sledges over the tundra in summer, on dog-sleigh over the tundra in winter, on camels, on small Kirghiz horses, on lively Kabardian horses, on big horse-sleighs and carts, in Kuban wagonettes, in a PO-2 aircraft, in two, three and four-engine aircraft, on a donkey, in a helicopter, in cars of every make and quality from Mercedes to the one dubbed "goat," on fishing boats and trawlers, on speed boats, on ocean liners, on river tugs and rafts, on oxen, on an ice-breaker, on air-sledges, on an ice floe and behind a harnessed elk.

Taking it all round, I consider the quietest and most convenient transport of all is the river steamer. But that was quite out of the question in the present case.

Suddenly a daring thought struck me—what about walking? I could get out of a car somewhere in the middle of the fields and follow my nose along the first path I saw. If there was a path, there would certainly be a village at the end of it. What village? That did not matter. From one village there would be a path leading to another, and then on to a third. Where nightfall found me, I would stop. Knock at the door of the first cottage and spend the night there. Then in the morning, on again. Six weeks of it. If I walked as much as ten kilometres a day, and that certainly is no great effort, I would cover four hundred and fifty versts.

The only snag was, that the idea came to me in December, while a hike like this meant waiting till June at least.

My favourite occupation at this time became the study of maps. I began with the map of the Soviet Union, but here Vladimir region could have been covered with a five-kopeck piece. However long I studied this little patch, it told me nothing except that Vladimir region lay between the Moscow and Nizhni-Novgorod regions. At about this time I recalled reading somewhere that Vladimir region "occupies the area between the Oka and Volga, the site of the Vladimir-Suzdal principality, later the Moscow principality, which developed into the Moscow state and finally into the great Russian Empire, surpassing in area all other states in the world."

So this was where Russia had its first roots.

Very soon I got a large-scale map of the district—five kilometres to the centimetre. There was a great deal of green on it that indicated forests, and many shaded patches that were swamps. The remaining white left one to guess at cultivated fields and meadows.

Most of that white was in the upper part of the map, in the north, the part known as Vladimir Opolye (ploughlands), while the green flowed downwards to form the famous Meshchera woods and swamps. These two parts—Opolye and Meshchera—comprised Vladimir region. This was the first thing the map told me.

I could sit all night putting my questions to that map.

"What animals roamed the Vladimir region in the old days?" I asked, and the map replied, "*Tur* (aurochs) used to roam the woods, the names speak of them—Turino village, Turino hamlet, Turovo, Turygino. There were sables, too—and they have left their name in the villages of Sobol, Sobolevo, Soboli,

Soboltsevo, Sobolyata. . . . And *los* (elk)—Losevo and Losye. Beavers gave their name to Bobrovo, and there is the village called Gus (goose). . . .”

“What tribes lived here in ancient times?”

“There were tribes of Finnish extraction, the Muroms, Meryas and Ves. They have gone, but their names remain in rivers, towns, lakes and settlements—Murom, Suzdal, Nerl, Peksha, Vorsha, Koloksha, Klyazma, Sudogda, Gza, Teza, Nerekhta, Suvoroshch, Sankhar, Kshara, Isikhra. . . .

“Then came the Slavic tribes. They put up their wooden huts close to the Finnish settlements and began peacefully cultivating the land. There was land a-plenty, no man jostled his neighbour. So alongside Kideksha come the villages Krasnoye, Dobrynskoye, Poretskoye. . . . You can tell by the names where these Slavic settlers came from. Lybed, Galich, Vyshgorod—all these are names from Kiev way.”

The map told me, too, of an imaginative sense of beauty in these people—for no dull or grim person could ever have given a village such a name as Venki (wreaths of flowers).

The Slavic settlers were ahead of the former population in development, so they gradually became preponderant. They did not drive out the Muroms, Meryas or Ves, they did not kill them off, they simply absorbed them, assimilated them, so that only names were left which might seem strange to a newcomer, but caused no wonder to any of the local people. The Vorsha? All right—a river that every boy knew was good for bathing and fishing—and that was all.

These were the things the map told me.

In the forests and on swampy land grain grows poorly. The Vladimir people have always known that the land alone would not feed them; that is why they often left their villages for seasonal work, that is why we had all those Vladimir icon painters, those makers of birch sandals and sheepskin coats, those wool-carders, feltmakers, harnessmakers, embroiderers, charcoal burners, tar-distillers, sicklemakers, toymakers, basketmakers, mat weavers, tar-sprayers, joiners, bristlemakers, wheelwrights, chestmakers, coopers, carpenters, potters, brickmakers, brass workers, blacksmiths and stonecutters.

Every trade has its own smell. Harnessmakers smell of untanned leather, charcoal burners of birch smoke, carders and makers of sheepskin coats smell of wool, mat-weavers of fragrant bast, icon painters of oil, coopers and wheelwrights of oak shavings, potters and brickmakers of drying clay, basketmakers of bitter willow, to say nothing of tar-distillers and sprayers.

Old guide-books enthusiastically recommended a tour of Vladimir region. It described in detail the road from Vladimir to Suzdal, what is known as Stromynka—the road from Moscow through Alexandrov to Yuryev-Polsky, and from there to Suzdal and Vladimir. The reason lay in the great number of monasteries and ancient churches in Vladimir region, the rare Rublev and Ushakov icons, and places connected with royalties. Ivan Grozny prayed in one place, he imprisoned his wife in another, somewhere else the cast-off wife of Peter the Great lived; Dimitri Pozharsky was in this village when the envoys of Nizhni-Novgorod came to petition him to save Russia. There, too, Alexander Nevsky was buried. A

royal ukaz is still preserved, giving instructions about the ceremonies with which the ashes of this famous prince and warrior should travel when it was decided that they should be taken from the shabby provincial town of Vladimir to the capital, St. Petersburg. Prince Alexander should, of course, have been buried in St. Petersburg at once, but the trouble was, at the time of his death Vladimir was an important city, while St. Petersburg did not yet exist. So the ukaz directed: "After the casket with the ashes of the saint is raised from his place of rest, it shall be borne out with all due honours and placed beneath a great canopy. It shall be sent on its journey with the singing of psalms and the ringing of bells as is meet for a great saint, it shall journey at a measured pace, with due consideration of the highway, so that on fair ground there should not be unneedful lagging, and on bad parts they should avoid hurtful speed."

As for Dimitri Pozharsky, from his tomb they took only the marble mausoleum and carried it off somewhere, the ashes of the prince still rest in Suzdal. But we shall come to his grave later, and there will be time enough to describe it in detail then.

So the old guide-books strongly recommended Vladimir region. And it is a serious omission in the new tourist guide-books which always describe the Georgian Military Highroad, Arkhangelskoye village and Lake Issyk, that they never have a word about Yuryev-Polsky, or Suzdal, or Murom, or Mstera, or Gus-Khrustalny, or Bogolyubov, or even Vladimir itself. . . . So after one glance through these books, I shut them with a slam.

"Have you bought your tent, thermos and all the rest of it?" experienced hikers asked me.

"No, and I won't."

"But how can you go off hiking without a tent? Half the joy of it is boiling your kettle over a camp-fire, making fish soup—and that means you simply have to have a rod."

"No, the best place to spend the night is in a farmer's house, and get my meals there too. So I shan't need any of all that. I shan't take even a hunk of bread or a lump of sugar with me. I don't see why on earth I should try to avoid other people, it's much pleasanter to spend the night with them, talk to them, get to know them, how they look at everything and what their lives are like."

THE FIRST DAY

Here begins a true and faithful account of all the adventures which befell the author and his companions during their journeyings over Vladimir region. The trip began on the 7th of June, 1956, at midday, at a wooden bridge over the Kirzhach, the border between the Moscow and Vladimir regions. And the beginning was this:

The big Moscow-Vladimir route taxi at last escaped the stony labyrinth of the city, picked up speed and raced out on to the broad, straight highway. Part of it was indeed an excellent motor road with one-way traffic and even a central

strip planted with grass and shrubs. But then came stretches where the way was blocked by mounds of sand, torn-up ground and collections of excavators of all kinds. We were told that this was not merely repairs along the good old Gorky Highway leading to ancient famous Vladimir, it was the construction of a great Moscow-Peking road.

The car raced at a speed of a hundred kilometres, then waddled over mounds and hummocks and followed lorry tracks from side to side, crawling at less than walking speed.

It was blazing hot, even the wind that rushed singing into the open windows brought no relief. There were three of us in the car. There would have been only two, but my wife had insisted on seeing me off on my "dreadful" trip.

One never knows what may happen in this world, so I had better introduce my wife—just in case. Her name is Rose, she has dark hair and a warm, dark colouring. . . . But on the whole, I am inclined to agree with that Frenchman who said a wife has no looks, good or bad. At least, it is not the part of a husband to describe them.

The third passenger was an army major with a square reddish beard. Of all three, he was the only one with the sober, sensible intention of going to the place for which he had bought a ticket.

Suddenly I felt a catch of the breath. And indeed, I might well be thrilled. All winter I had been impatiently awaiting this day, and the very fact that it was here was sufficient cause for excitement. But it wasn't that. The real cause I would not admit to myself. It was the imminent prospect of solitude. I would leave the car, leave the road, plunge into the tall June grass and for two months wander alone in those green expanses. The prospect was thrilling, and a little alarming. The unknown always is. I did not know where I would have dinner that day or what my dinner would be, I did not know where I would spend the night. I would discover unknown villages, but in them nobody awaited me and taking it all round, wasn't the whole idea a bit crazy? After all, there were plenty of tourist routes with well-managed hostels. Big parties hiked along them, equipped with everything they could possibly need. That was something anyone could understand.

But it was too late now for second thoughts—and there was no time for them, either.

"Would you please stop?"

Bumping slightly, the car drew on to the shoulder of the road and stopped. The driver turned round, concerned.

"Is somebody feeling bad?"

"No, we want to get out. We aren't going any further."

"But your ticket's to Vladimir. That's another hundred kilometres."

"So much the better. We're stopping here. We've taken a fancy to this place."

"As you like," said the driver.

The car vanished into the distance. My rucksack for some reason seemed much heavier than when I had tried it on in Moscow.

"Well, come on. Come with me across the bridge, then you can thumb a ride back to Moscow."

The wooden bridge stood on scratched wooden piers. The shallow brown water flowed noiselessly round them. The white sand at the edge of the river turned gold as it vanished under the water, to appear again as tiny islets, once more sparkling white. One bank sloped gently. Young willows rose from the water about six feet from the edge in such a froth of green that even the sand underneath seemed to have taken on some of their colour. The other bank was steep although not very high. Chunks of it must often slip down gurgling into the water, to dissolve and be washed away. A flock of slender pine-trees had run right to the edge and stood looking at themselves in the water, but the river kept wiping out their reflection with its ripples.

We crossed the bridge into Vladimir region.

We said good-bye. I ran down the slope and started off up-stream. There was nothing of any particular interest to be seen. A one-legged man had left his crutches and clothing on the grass and was hopping over the sand to the river for a bathe. A woman was rinsing linen, standing knee-deep in the water, her skirts tucked up. Some distance away stood a car; a family was resting near it, a gleaming white sheet stretched on four sticks giving them shade.

The path I had chosen swung round a big sand quarry criss-crossed with the tracks of tyres and crawler treads, and led to a great stretch of water-meadows with trees growing in clusters and alone. Here I heard a quick panting behind me—somebody was running fast. I turned, and saw Rose.

"Did I forget something?"

"No, you haven't forgotten anything. I'm coming with you, that's all."

"Where?"

"Wherever you're going. And don't try to argue. I'm not letting you go all alone. And you needn't look at my shoes like that. We'll knock the heels off at once, and when we get to a shop I'll buy canvas shoes or something."

"What shop?"

"Any village shop. D'you think you're the only one who knows what villages are like? Each one has its shop, we'll buy something there. Don't waste time—give me half the load and off we go."

"Half, no less!"

"Well, all right, if you don't want to give me half, give me the camera."

So I said good-bye to my solitude before I had had time to enjoy it.

The river we followed twisted right and left, its gleaming water pushing against clusters of willows or steep sandy banks. After a little while we grew tired of this winding course and decided to take the first path we came across. Soon we saw one on our right, leading up a rather steep rise studded with oak-trees. We followed it, and in half an hour found ourselves in an old pine wood. Here everything was hushed, voiceless. High up where the young green of the lofty crowns stood etched against the bright whiteness of clouds some vagrant breeze may have wandered, but down below all was quiet. The warm, motionless air held a strong honey-like fragrance, but for a long time we sought in vain for its source.

Everybody knows how attractive the bright red clusters of whortleberries look in autumn, glowing like drops of blood against their shining dark-green leaves, but few take any notice of the flowers on this evergreen shrub clustering under the trees. And it would never have entered our heads that such an insignificant bit of a flower could fill the wood with its perfume. And for that matter, the words "insignificant bit of a flower" are an undeserved insult to what is actually one of the most delicately lovely.

Just take the trouble to break off a few sprays, or still better, to kneel down and look carefully at the plant as it grows. Then what seemed at a distance to be a dull colourless patch will disclose a wonderful diversity. Tiny bells, rosy-white, hang in a drooping tassel at the end of a dark-green stem. Each bell is no bigger than a match-head, and each one breathes its sweet perfume. Those are whortleberry flowers.

There are other bells, too, but queer-looking ones. They are quite round, more like berries reddened on one side. Even more, they are like tiny china beads, but so delicate and fragile that no human hands could have made them. When autumn comes these will provide a treat for children and grouse, for each bead will turn into a juicy bluish-black berry—a bilberry.

Then there are clusters of tiny white pitchers with bright red necks hanging upside down, adding their fragrance to the air. These are the flowers of bear-berries, known in medicine.

No, it is only from a distance that the tiny blossoms of the pine woods seem alike. If you look more closely, whortleberry bells have all the delicate beauty of the most showy flowers. They are tiny—but what of it? In jewellers' craft microscopic work commands a big price.

Here and there among the hummocks and stumps lay neat carpets of that pale-brown moss always found in dry pine woods. And everywhere, gleaming white pyramids rose from the grey soil or the green turf. These were the work of moles, disclosing a secret of the wood—that it was all rooted in a bed of clean river sand.

Sometimes we came to large clearings where all the trees had been cut. Baby pines were scattered about, bathed in sunshine. It was as though the mother-trees had sent their children out to play, and when evening came would call them home again to nestle under dark-green wings.

One thing did puzzle us. On either side of the road lay carefully tended paths, clear of vegetation and apparently strewn with sand. We racked our brains, and then hoped that chance would bring the explanation.

The pines were in blossom—it was enough to strike a branch with a stick and a thick golden cloud surrounded us, settling slowly in the still air.

Yesterday—nay, even this morning we had lived within four walls no more than five metres apart; the sudden change intoxicated us—the woodland flowers, the sunshine and the piny smell, all this glorious world in which we found ourselves. I was hampered by the rucksack, but Rose would scamper ahead and call back that she had found lilies-of-the-valley, or disappear among the trees and come running back frightened by a "huge bird" that had started up right under her feet.

A gleam of water showed through the trees in front, and soon the path led us to a big lake. This was a lake without banks; the thick grass of a forest clearing before us turned all of a sudden into water. It was like a hollow filled by the rain, one could not help feeling that under the lake the grass continued, it had been drowned only recently, and not for long. But a little way from the edge we could see through the water a sloping yellow sandy bed, and as the lake deepened the water became darker.

Long, narrow landing-stages projected from the shore and close to them a flat-bottomed boat dozed, its reflection inky-black on the gleaming brown surface. In a clearing about thirty paces from the edge there was a log house with verandahs, not particularly old, and we could see a number of brick buildings on the farther shore. Voices carried over from them—snatches of song and girls' laughter.

A slight cough made us turn. A man had come silently up behind us as we stood gazing. How long he had been standing there I cannot say. He looked round about sixty—clean-shaven, wrinkled like a dried-up apple, his head crowned with a touse of hair which might have been curly or simply uncombed. The first thing that struck the eye were his high rubber boots, the kind used in swampy districts.

"Is that palace yours?" I asked with a jerk of the head towards the house with verandahs.

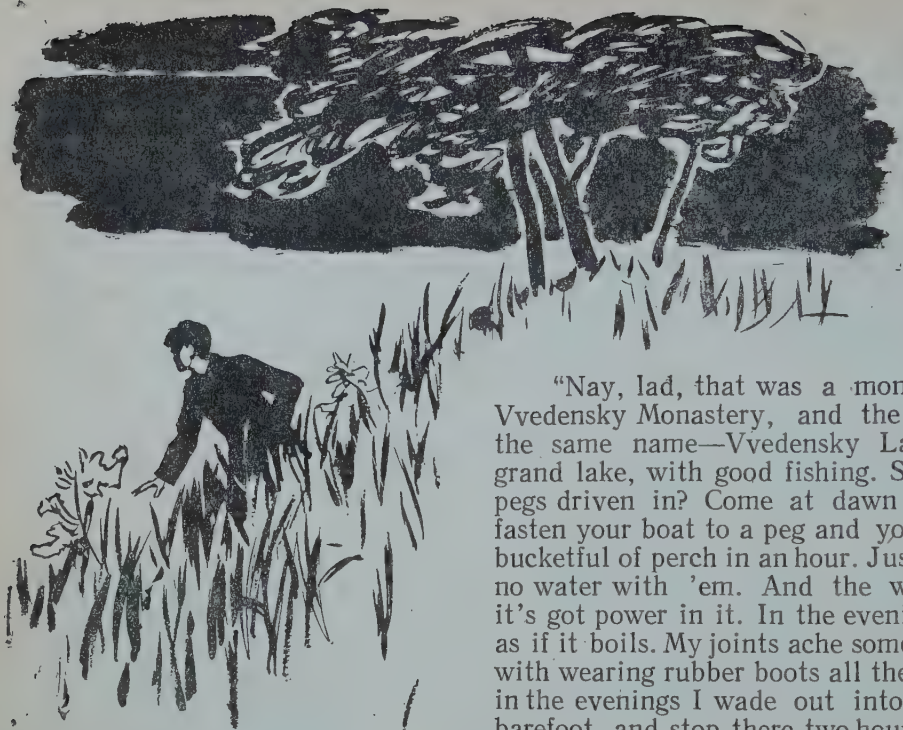
"Nay, lad, I'm just a forester, foresters don't have palaces. There was a manager, worked over there," and the old man pointed to the far side of the lake. "Aye, forty years he worked, and they let him put up that house here. So he did. And a real lordly place he chose, too. But he died just the same when his time came."

"Have you been a forester long?"

"Aye, long enough, forty years it'll be. I was a woodcutter in the old days, worked for the master, Ivan Nikolayevich Shelekhov. All this used to belong to him. Real wealthy, he was."

"Where did he live—not in those brick buildings across the lake, surely?"





"Nay, lad, that was a monastery, the Vvedensky Monastery, and the lake's got the same name—Vvedensky Lake. It's a grand lake, with good fishing. See all those pegs driven in? Come at dawn with a rod, fasten your boat to a peg and you'll have a bucketful of perch in an hour. Just solid fish, no water with 'em. And the water itself, it's got power in it. In the evening it's like as if it boils. My joints ache something cruel with wearing rubber boots all the time, but in the evenings I waded out into the lake, barefoot, and stop there two hours, or mebbe three, and my legs are like new. That's something folks don't know about. And

often I'll take a net with me, not to waste time, like. Kill two birds with one stone—my legs are better, and I've got two baskets of bream to take home. But bream's getting less now. It's the peaty water. Our lake's choked with ice most every winter, and that's bad for the fish. Of course, it's not very deep, six metres at most. Now White Lake, nearby, that's another story. Water clear as tears. And thirty-five metres deep, it'll be. A pit, White Lake is, a deep pit. That's why the water's so cold. And the cold's driven the fish away. It must have some underground channel to a river, or mebbe some sea. . . ."

He peered at us to see our reaction to this idea. Perhaps he wanted to try out on strangers the feasibility of his unlikely hypothesis, to test its sound. "Yes," he concluded, "your feet'll soon be aching if you try wading out there."

I felt it was time to bring the old man back to the point from which he had started his discourse.

"But where did your Shelekhov live, if it wasn't in those buildings—Vladimir?"

"Vladimir, indeed! He'd never have lived in a place like that, Shelekhov wouldn't. In Warsaw, that's where he lived. Only he didn't rightly live, not what you could call live, he lay there paralyzed. But even when he was well, he never came to this forest of his, not once."

"You mean to say he owned all this lovely place and never made use of it?"

"He made use of it all right. He got money from it. But as for the beauty of it, it's only folks like us, foresters, that can put a value on that, and why? Because we're in the woods all our lives. A cat'll get fond of a dog, even, if you teach it from the time it's a kitten, and a man can get as fond of the woods as of his own wife or any other live thing. Look at that pine-tree, now—it's got life, you can even talk to it."

We said good-bye to the old man, but at the same moment I remembered the mysterious sandy paths beside the broad main one we had followed and turned back to ask about them. The old man gave me a benevolent look.

"That's against fire, lad. You go through the woods and drop a match or a cigarette, mebbe—and there you've got a fire started. Aye, that you have! But those fire-tracks, they stop it before it gets real bad. We look after the woods, aye, we look after them well!"

Now we were faced with the vital question—where to go, for the sun would soon be setting. When we had first left the river, we had caught a glimpse of a village away to the left. We would have to get that far, at least.

Now the beauty of the forest ceased to enchant us. The rapidly falling dusk hastened our steps, but it was quite dark by the time we reached our goal. A light flashed on in one of the cottages. Boldly we marched towards it. . . .

And so the first day of our wanderings ended.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY

When small boys splash about in a pleasantly warm backwater under the willows, or race in clouds of spray through the rippling shoals, or with gasps and snorts pull struggling crayfish from their holes, or simply lie in the sunshine beside the quiet water, it rarely enters their sun-bleached heads to wonder where the river comes from, and whither it goes.

The river flowed past that spot before those boys were born, and it will still flow when they are gone. For them, the river is like time, the earth, the air. It can have neither end nor beginning.

But later, when school begins and the first geography lessons bring such information as "The Volga rises in the Valdai Heights," or "The Volga flows into the Caspian Sea," when children pore over magical books of travel like *Frigate Pallada* or *Dersu Uzala*, the mystery of the river will catch boyish imaginations. They will whisper in little knots, and then pieces of bread will disappear from the table at home, so will the bread knife—a knife thin and worn, but an excellent sword or dagger for a boy.

The expedition sets off at dawn, to return in the evening defeated by squabbles and the fears of the faint-hearted, without ever discovering where their river begins or ends.

Incidentally, country boys visualize every river as starting from a cold spring thrusting its way up from the earth. That was how I saw the beginning of Vorsha

—green grass, shady bushes, and beneath them the cold sparkling water pouring out and away with a merry gurgle. But where was it, that beginning? I asked the grown-ups.

"If you follow the river," my father patiently explained, "you'll come to Zhuravlikha, that's a great, dark forest. Better not go in, robbers live there. After Zhuravlikha the fields start again, and beyond those is the village of Busino. It's beside Busino that our Vorsha begins. You can go and see it when you get a bit bigger."

To the impatience of childhood even five minutes can bring rebellion, and here I was told to wait till I got bigger! So with a trusty friend I set off on my great expedition. We were so small that we feared to move a step from the river, and followed all its windings and curves. We walked along the bank, and the world became primeval. We would have been afraid to bathe now, in fact we would scarcely have been surprised if the craggy head of a crocodile had peered out from behind some bush. The river had led us out of the world of everyday reality into its secret ways.

It must be said to our honour that when Zhuravlikha began, we did not turn back; we went on for quite a distance, pushing our way through the thickets on the bank, mostly bird-cherries and raspberry canes.

What finished us was a clearing on a steep rise, or to be more exact, not the clearing itself, but a cottage standing on it. If a dog had rushed out barking, or somebody had shouted at us, it would not have been so bad. But the cottage stood silent, as though empty. Yet smoke rose from the chimney. Father's words about robbers came to our minds. We looked wildly at each other and took to our heels.

Later we were told that a family called Kositsyn lived in the cottage. But who were they, these Kositsyns, and why did they live there like people in a fairy-tale—all alone in the dark forest, on the bank of a river, in the middle of a clearing rosy with wild strawberries? Perhaps these were the robbers?

When childhood ended and everything had become clear, fallen into its proper place in my mind, I heard the call of far places and had no time to return to that dream, bright as childhood itself, of seeking the source of the Vorsha.

Now, as I pored over a map, the pencil touched this village and that, marked with a cross the interesting names such as Ratislovo (here an army—*rat*—must have stood, but undoubtedly there had been some important word—*slovo*—spoken) and stopped by a tiny circle with a name in equally tiny letters. From the depths of memory a distant dream of childhood rose again in all its fresh sparkle, its shimmering hues. For that word was Busino. . . .

Towards the end of the day we and the cattle entered the village together in a transparently golden cloud of dust that smelt of new milk. We had been told that the foreman of the cattle section would know of a place where we could sleep, so we made our way to his cottage, at the end of a long row standing near the edge of a broad, shallow gully. The foreman was not at home, so we sat down on the earthen bank round the base of the walls. His wife sat beside us with her little boy on her lap. Gradually the number of children increased until all six sturdy sons, the eldest ten or twelve, were gathered round us.

We hesitated to put the great question—did the Vorsha rise here? Suppose she said, "What Vorsha? There isn't any Vorsha here, there isn't any river at all." Why didn't they speak of it themselves, if a river really did have its source here? After all, it's not something every village can boast about! Probably there was nothing, after all. Where had I got the idea that the Vorsha began in Busino? From childhood, from what my father had said. But a father can tell a child all sorts of things, all sorts of tales and legends.

Our side of the gully descended in an easy slope covered with thick dry grass, but it seemed deep. The other side was steeper. At the bottom, wisps of pale mist floated like down in the purple dusk. They mingled and drew out into a pale ribbon until the gully was half filled with their dense whiteness. This was a hopeful sign. Mist does not form in a dry gully; down there, in the grass, a stream must flow.

It was getting quite dark when a young man in a faded tunic appeared—the father of those six sturdy lads. He took us to a cottage where we could spend the night.

It was darker inside the cottage than out, but we could see the room was untidy, the table heaped high with the freshly-cut leaves of coarse tobacco which our host, an old man with a round beard, began scraping into a plywood box. On the same table lay a number of calendar pages evidently intended for cigarette paper. Then an oil lamp cast a flickering light in the room, and we could see the old man's red-rimmed, watering eyes and blackened fingers.

The old woman, blowing the embers of the fire to a brighter glow, glanced at us and her eyes halted on my face in a long, questioning gaze. She went out of the room but returned at once and as she fussed with the samovar I found her eyes constantly on me. It gave me a feeling of acute discomfort. First they held a dumb question, then almost a prayer, and at last only pain. Finally I took courage and asked her why she kept looking at me, had she seen me before somewhere?

"I thought it was my boy come back, but didn't want to tell me at once. He's like you as two drops of water. I've been waiting for him thirteen years. There wasn't ever any paper saying he was killed, so he'll be coming home some day."

"Hush your foolish talk, woman," the old man interrupted her roughly. "Those who were to come, came long ago."

The woman went out, and the old man took a photograph from the wall and handed it to us.

"It's a true word, you're mighty like our Lyonka, you gave me quite a start too."

It was a picture of a strong, round-faced young fellow with fair hair and a snub nose. I have to admit I did not see much likeness to myself, but a mother's eye is keen, and there must have been something.

I had not told my companions why we had come to Busino, fearing disappointment. Now, this evening, I felt I must find out for certain. I went outside. While we had been sitting in the room with the flickering oil lamp the moon had risen—a fresh, pale moon that looked as though it had just washed in the Milky Way. The mist in the gully had thickened and lay a silvery blue in the moonlight. I

almost ran down that gully. In a moment my trousers were wet to the knees, as though I were wading, and my shoes began to squelch. And again came that hopeful thought—such heavy dew always means water close by.

There was the damp smell of dense, thick fog. I descended into it to my waist, then it rose over my head and the outline of the moon became vague and blurred as though it had passed behind a light cloud. At the bottom of the gully the silence was almost tangible. Then I heard a far-away but distinct gurgling. I went towards the sound. On one side the gully branched out into a smaller one, not more than a hundred paces in length, closed by a sheer wall at the end. A spreading willow grew at the entrance, standing alone, with no other tree or bush near. And out of this gully ran a tiny stream, leaping and gurgling, full of gleaming lights and shadows. It had cut itself a deep, narrow bed and the grass grew so tall and thick on either side that sometimes it hid the stream completely.

Under the steep end wall of the gully the grass was like a thicket. The sharp scent of angelica came to catch my throat. Its flowers gleamed a greenish-white. And there, in the midst of this surging growth—there was the cradle of my river.

Four low walls of oak logs enclosed a space about one-and-a-half metres long and a metre wide. It was filled with water to the brim, but I discovered this only by touching the surface with my hand, it was so transparently clear.

Flowing out of this trough the water took a visible, vocal form, swirling and eddying, becoming—in a word—a stream.

Up the sides of the small gully big rosy heads of clover, wild pinks and golden buttercups formed a dense growth. Above the birthplace of the river, right over its cradle, thick wheat grew; the pollen from all this flowering descended to the spring, and dandelion seeds floated weightlessly, to rest at last on the clear water.

The tiny stream gleamed with many shades of green as it trickled down the gully, but I could imagine how it would sparkle in the morning sunshine.

Only in this way, amid grass, flowers and wheat, could our Vorsha have its beginning. Later it would meet dirt, manure and sluggish clay along its course, but it would pass all this indifferently, remembering its clean, flowery childhood.

It would flow far yet, that tiny stream, until the first scoured-out pool brought something new—depth.

It must wait awhile before it formed a smooth surface to reflect woods and clouds and the sun itself, and at night-time, the stars.

It must wait awhile, this baby river, before it could boast of big fish rising to make rings on water reddened by dawn or sunset.

Yet soon girls, flushed and hot with walking, would come down to cool their faces, and a woman would dip her buckets and carry them home on a yoke, while a shoal of lively perch shot away from the splashing and a fisherman sat motionless with his simple rod and line.

Hamlets and villages would stand on its banks, smoke rising from their chimneys (without the river they would not be there), and the ringing of scythes would come from the water-meadows. At the time of haymaking, the lads, following an ancient custom, would toss the girls, fully dressed as they were, into the

deep, warm water. Then would come the first bridge across the Vorsha. All sorts of rubbish would fall from it, so cautious chub would be found there, rising from the deep water to feed.

There would be names—Long Pool, Black Pool. And here the river entered my childhood, to become almost its most important circumstance. Nothing can have such a strong, decisive influence on the developing psychology of a child as a river flowing near. It is the first friend, the first plaything, the first fairy-tale.

It is not very large, the Vorsha, and there are few legends told about it. But is it really regrettable that nobody has been drowned in it? For colourful glory we must have a tale of a princess cast into the river, or a fair maid, deceived and despairing, leaping from its bank. We honour the useless, blood-thirsty eagle and look with indifference at the yellow bunting, the chiff-chaff or the fly-catcher that saves our gardens and woods.

The eagle is actually honoured for its savage blood-thirstiness; for this it is lauded in song and verse. Yet it might be remembered that Saltykov-Shchedrin said the eagle is first and foremost a bird of prey, a harmful bird.

But as for the industrious bunting—when do we praise it for destroying, tiny as it is, whole poods of pests, or pity it when some bird of prey catches it and tears it to pieces?

My Vorsha too works tirelessly, year after year, bringing benefits and pleasure to human beings. But it is the children whose joy in it is the greatest. Like the bunting, the Vorsha is not imposing. It is a river of alders and small yellow lilies, shimmering shells and sand, vagrant branches and dark pools. And in spring the bird-cherry trees shower their pale petals down upon it, to float slowly with the current.

I still remember the time when one could catch a whole basket of fish with one's bare hands. There were tremendous numbers of chub, perch, ruff, roach, char, dace, gudgeon, and many others.

I even remember how pike came to the Vorsha. Somewhere lower down (near Shaplygin, I think) a mill dam broke, and when the river was high the first visitors arrived. Uneasy rumours flew round the village, but for a long time there was nothing to be seen. At last my neighbour Kostya, five years older than I, asked me to help him lift out a creel. It was by Ford Drift. He raised the creel from the water—and there, inside it, something was beating and flailing against the wet reed sides, threatening to break them. Kostya yelled, "Chub—burbot—no, pike!" And then we had a good look at the first pike I had ever seen as it lay on the grass.

After that the number of fish began to dwindle. Those early pike must have had a grand time. The fish were trustful, they had no instinct to warn them against pike. They were capable of swimming right into the marauder's jaws. Now, however, a more cautious generation has arisen, from a natural selection conducted by sharp teeth. Any gudgeon in the Vorsha today is a wily gudgeon, not easily caught.

There is no end to all I could relate about the Vorsha. Many were the fishing adventures I had, many the times I saw the sun rise beside it, many the

nightingales I heard, many the strolls at night along its bank. Countless were the poems I recited to it, and it sang its own poems to me in its quiet, gentle murmur.

And all this, that special, happy world like no other, everything embodied in the name Vorsha, began here, by my feet, in an oaken trough surrounded with grass and flowers, with wheat above its head.

Green trickles mingled with the dark grass, running towards the large spreading willow. There the little stream turned to the right and flowed along the main gully, embracing other springs on its way.

In the morning the three of us came down, I mean Rose, myself, and a Moscow painter Seryoga, whom we met at one of our stops. He had no definite plans and gladly joined us. How different everything was in the early sunshine! The green of the water had changed to a gold that was almost flaming, and grass and flowers shook down heavy drops like gems.

There were seven springs in all, but the one I had found the previous night, Gremyachka, was the biggest and main one.

Now we could examine the bottom of the river's cradle. It was formed by clean sand that rose in tiny yellow fountains here and there through the glassy water, where it came welling up. I counted sixty of them.

With almost ritualistic ceremony we drank from the spring and washed in it, and then followed the stream. It led us to where my own irrecoverable, golden-headed childhood lay entangled among the rye and clover.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY

This day began, then, by the spring called Gremyachka, the source of the river Vorsha.

As we walked we argued about which had come first, the Ugro-Finnish name of the river or the Slavic name of its source.

Meanwhile, the sun rose higher, the dew dried on the leaves and into the clean, washed air of early morning flowed the first sweet scents. All the grasses and wild flowers were in bloom, it was that fragrant time before haymaking. Sometimes the sweetness became a scent of pure honey; we were passing beehives.

In villages, old women would look at me, and look again, and then say, "Seems like I've seen ye somewhere. Might ye be from Alepino, now?"

"Alepino it is."

"Aye, there's something about ye."

"How's that?"

"Just the look o'ye. You're not 'Leksei 'Lekseyevich's son, mebbe?"

"That same."

"Aye, I thought there was something in your looks."

Soon we entered Zhuravlikha, but from the other end, the far end from which

I had never entered before. I kept looking towards the river which flowed close to us all the way. Would I see Petrukha sitting under a bush?

Petrukha was a notable personality. He was a cobbler, but his trade was the last thing in the world he thought about. Consequently, he was always wretchedly poor. He had no children, and his wife was said to go round begging.

The culprit himself spent day and night on the river bank with his rods. He was not merely a keen fisherman, he was a fanatic, a real artist, and probably a bit of a poet, too, for he could sometimes be seen sitting motionless by the water for hours on end without any rod at all.

Unshaven, in a faded black shirt worn over his trousers, barefoot, with two rods over his shoulder and a tin bucket in his hand—that is how Petrukha rises before my mind's eye. He would probably have been uncombed, too, had his hair not been clipped to a bristly shortness. He was about sixty.

One of his rods had a walnut handle and a juniper lash, the other was of birch-wood, in one piece. The line was woven of horse-hair, full of knots. His float was an ordinary cork from a half-litre vodka bottle. I never saw Petrukha drunk.

Since no very warm welcome awaited him at home, he would wander all day by the river and sleep on the bank wherever night found him, making himself fish stew or exchanging fresh fish for a dinner at some cottage.

It was whispered that he practised magic, for in places where others would sit for a week without a nibble, Petrukha would draw out fish after fish, but he preferred to do it when none were by. One thing is certain, he never scattered food as a lure, and his only bait was worms or bread.

It is to Petrukha I owe my love of fishing—and for that I shall be grateful as long as I live, because this is a love which, unlike others, never passes.

Before dawn he would waken me. "Lekseyevich, time to be moving." And shivering in the early chill, we would hurry away to some "catching" place. "There's a real good catching place under Kuryanov slope," I remember him saying.

Now, as we drew near my home, I told my companions much about Petrukha, and promised to get him to take us fishing at dawn. I had often mentioned him before, so they were impatient to get to Alepino and see this famous fisherman.

True, Petrukha had been failing recently—so I had heard. His legs were stiff from a lifetime of walking through the dew and wet grass, and now he had a hacking cough and shortness of breath.

Soon we came to that forest hut where the mysterious Kositsyns had lived. Suddenly Rose gave a cry. One might have thought she had stepped on a snake. But it was only a fine, red, wild strawberry, the first she had seen on our wanderings. My home welcomed her with gifts.

The "vein of berries" led us lower and lower towards the river, winding through the grass; meanwhile, a man in glasses and a shabby dark-blue tunic was watching us from up above. He was so short and broad that he looked almost square, his face was as round as it was good-humoured, and he was young and jolly.

"Hi, lads, my car's stuck, help me get it out. Got stuck in my own Zhuravlikha. It's a Moskvich, easy enough to push."

"Hullo—who are you?"

"Kositsyn—maybe you've heard the name? Used to live in the woodman's cottage up here. I'm going to visit the old folks."

So that is how we met Kositsyn junior, who turned out to be good company, fond of fishing through ice, senior instructor at the Military Academy and holder of the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

We got the Moskvich out at once, of course, and had to promise solemnly that no later than tomorrow we would go with him in that same Moskvich on a fishing trip to the Koloksha, camping out for the night, which meant two dawns on the water.

Less than two kilometres were left now to Alepino. Leaving Zhuravlikha, we could already see the tiny cross on the bell-tower peeping over a rise. Soon the tower itself would come into view, then the old lime-trees round it, then the roofs, and soon we would enter Moskovkin Lane and if my mother happened to glance out of the window, she would be able to see me coming.

THE SEVENTEENTH TO THE TWENTY-SECOND DAYS

These days we spent in Alepino. But this village, its people and the district round about could fill a whole book—which I shall certainly write some day.

Only one thing I need say—our fishing excursion with Petrukha did not come off. He had died only a little while before.

"He left you his rods. They're at the back, by the kitchen-garden."

I went round to the back and there they were, standing among the nettles that grew higher than the fence—the two rods I remembered so well, one with a walnut handle and juniper lash, the second in one piece, of birch. They were in perfect order. The village boys had not even cut off the hooks which still held fragments of bait set by Petrukha's stiff fingers.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY

If you look down the main street of our village you see fields of rye, and beyond those the dark strip of Samoilov Wood in the distance, stretching along the plain to the river Yeza. And from the bell-tower you can plainly see the blue hills rising beyond, disappearing into the mist.

True, it is a long time since I climbed that bell-tower—partly because the stairs are broken; so I do not know how the distances beyond the forest would look to me now. But a vision remains from childhood. When I was small I looked out at those hills, and the memory has never left me.

Our people seldom go in that direction, either driving or on foot, which has helped to preserve its virgin mystery. On bright, sunny days the white fingers of bell-towers rise here and there. Those mark the villages of Sacred Hill, Kuzmin Monastery and Ababurovo. But when I asked Father about those towers

rising from the mist, he answered "Who knows? Suzdal's over that way, maybe it's the churches there."

Now I understand that my father liked life to be colourful, and wanted to think that distant Suzdal could be seen from our village.

We hoped that the trees of Samoilov Wood would shelter us from the coming rain, for black clouds were chasing us. We saw the village we had left blurred as though a veil had been dropped before it, we saw that veil, pinned to the clouds trailing along the ground towards us, catching and passing trees, houses and fences. Now it dragged over the rye fields, and it was evidently not so light and airy as it seemed, for the rye bent before it as though a rough, heavy hand stroked it, as a peasant affectionately strokes the tousled, rye-coloured hair of his son.

The approaching sound of rain was a stimulus, and we ran until it overtook us—warm, July rain that did not crush or sting, but poured generously over us.

There was no point in running any more, you cannot race the rain. And if you have been soaked once, you cannot become any wetter.

The rain came in waves. The first passed and the sun showed itself. A golden steam rose from the earth. It rose from us too, from our backs, our shoes, our rucksacks. Then the clouds drew over again. The path became slippery and walking was difficult. Sticky mud clung heavily to our feet and we were glad when the wood began, with thick grass beside the path.

Seryoga had learned from his father to imitate the calls of birds, and he amused himself now by calling out all the cuckoos in Samoilov Wood. First he called once or twice without result; the birds were sheltering from the rain and did not answer. Then from far, far away we heard an answering "cuckoo!" A bird replied from the other side, then from behind. Seryoga continued and we could hear the deceived birds coming closer and closer. The ring became smaller until at last there were rustlings and flutterings from the bushes all round. The bewildered birds flew over the clearing, over our heads. Then Seryoga decided to call the grouse, but another downpour stopped him.

Warm as the rain was, our soaking clothes made us feel chilly. Then it changed to a fine drizzle, seeping down from a low cloud mass of unbroken grey. The tallest firs caught its lower drifts and tore off fragments that clung to their tops. This was the kind of rain that could go on for a very long time.

We approached the village of Kornevo from the rear. Choosing a fair-sized porch, we huddled under its shelter. So far walking had warmed us to a certain extent, but now we were blue to the lips, and dry clothing and a warm room seemed the height of human bliss. But it was still the early part of the day, so there was a longer period of unpleasantness ahead than behind us.

We could see the village from end to end. The broad street was empty as a football field during the interval, except for geese and hens picking their way about. That was a bad sign. During brief showers hens take shelter, waiting for the rain to pass over; if they come out, it usually means that it has set in for the day.

Lurching and splashing, a jeep came down the street, tossing up chunks of mud and frightening the hens and geese. It was just about to pass and vanish

when chilly, long-legged Seryoga leaped out in front of it like a goal-keeper making a save. The jeep stopped and we climbed thankfully in. Where it might be going mattered little to us, in our situation.

There were two other passengers, picked up along the road like ourselves—an old man and a serene-faced woman of about forty-five. The driver, a young fellow in a checked shirt whose eyebrows were so light as to be invisible, seemed to be just in his element on such roads. You would have said he found a sheer joy in giving the wheel a sharp twist when the car showed a disposition to turn sideways on or skid down a steep slope, or when at a critical point in a rise it zigzagged up a slimy road. The engine grunted, both clutches working, and streams of mud were thrown up by the wheels to spatter on the top.

"So you're from Moscow," said the driver, making a good guess. "Well, there's not that much difference between Moscow and us. Our houses are smaller and the road's trickier, that's all. You can thank your stars it's my car you met. All the lorries for a hundred kilometres round are stuck where the rain caught them. They can't travel in this. It's only for us the road's open." He slipped the gear lever forward, as though he was hurling the jeep with it. "Aye, it's a good car, this, we'd be sunk without it."

"A good driver too, I'd say."

The white brows drew together.

"Drive—anybody can do that. At our school there was one wooden-head, the instructor gave him up. But I said, let me have him, he'll learn all right, why, you can train a bear, even, to do all sorts of things. Well, and he finished the course and got his licence. He'll be sitting somewhere along the road now, stuck like all the rest."

The jeep passed villages, hamlets, copses. We were on my blue hills, veiled in fine rain.

"Now tell me," said the old man, "is it true in Moscow there's shops that'll bring your things home to you? Whatever you want—here it is, right at your door?"

"There's more than that, Grandad," said the driver before anyone else could answer. "You go into shops and there's nobody selling, you just pick up what you want."

"Don't talk silly," was the angry reply. "You're young yet to make a mock of an old man. It wasn't you I asked."

The woman turned out to be a very interesting person, once we got into talk with her, which was not very easy. At first glance one would have said without hesitation that she was a plain farm woman, or perhaps a factory worker, nothing more; actually, she was a deputy in the Supreme Soviet. We had never before had an opportunity to talk to deputies about their work, so we pelted her with questions, taking in the smallest details.

Praskovya Ivanovna Frolova was a village girl who lost both parents in an epidemic when she was twelve. She found a job as nursemaid, tending strangers' children for her keep, eating the bitter bread of dependence, and seeing little that was gay. After some time she decided to see if she could find some sort of work at Ivan Bazhenov's textile mill.

That was thirty-five years ago. The owner of the factory vanished, which was no loss. On the contrary, alongside the old rickety building others rose, handsome brick buildings with big windows. The single barrack for the workers was replaced by a big housing estate, almost a town in itself.

For Praskovya Ivanovna, too, changes came with the years. She married, had four children, lost her husband early and brought up her family.

The work one does leaves its imprint. A weaver, especially one serving many looms, must not fuss, get flustered, or make unnecessary movements. And Praskovya Ivanovna was a calm, sensible woman not only at work but in everything. She never seemed in a hurry yet the house was always in order, without a scrap of dust anywhere, and the children were clean, their clothes mended and ironed. Her eyes were quiet and kindly, with a straight, direct look. If she had cares or troubles she kept them to herself—other people had enough worries of their own.

At election meetings Praskovya Ivanovna heard speakers say the people choose their best men and women to represent them, but she could not understand at all in what way she was one of the best. She also heard that a deputy must serve the people and justify their trust. But she felt as though all this were about somebody else, it was somebody else who would serve the people, because she, Praskovya Ivanovna, had not the slightest idea how she ought to set about it. It was only early on the first spring morning that she realized all this concerned her and none other, it was she who was a deputy from now on, demands would be made upon her and not somebody else.

"What am I lying here for?" she said to herself, startled. "No time to lie abed now."

She rose quickly, splashed cold water over her face, put everything in order and only then noticed how early it still was; nobody was up and there was nothing for her to do. The new, recently installed telephone was silent. Clear spring sunshine poured in through the window.

Praskovya Ivanovna's office was a small room in a brick house. She went there and examined it with a practical eye. Water-bottle and glass, telephone, a big handsome table, good heating. But the size? No bigger than a dog-kennel. If two or three people came at once, there would not be room to turn round. And everything could be heard out in the passage, what if somebody wanted to talk confidentially.

Her first thought was to go to the factory director (perhaps he would see her) and speak about better premises. She had already put on her shawl when she stopped, with a smile at herself, sat down at the table and picked up the telephone.

"Give me the director, please. . . . Sergei Fyodorovich? Didn't you know me? . . . Could you step over to my office a moment, there's something I want to show you."

Together they examined the other rooms, decided where partitions could be put up and taken down, and in general, the best way to arrange everything.

"I'll go back to the mill with you," said Praskovya Ivanovna. "I just looked in here for a moment, there's nothing to do so far."

Before the last words were out of her mouth, a wrinkled face with rapidly blinking eyes peered round the edge of the door.

"Is this the right place I've come to?" asked the old woman, and Praskovya Ivanovna realized that her first visitor had arrived.

"Sergei Fyodorovich," she whispered to the director, "maybe there's some sort of rules or instructions for deputies to the Soviet—how to conduct affairs and—that sort of thing?"

"Hardly," laughed the director. "It's not instructions you have to follow, but your own conscience and common sense. Good luck." He turned and went, leaving Praskovya Ivanovna to deal with her first problem.

"Where are you from, Granny?"

"From Sudogda, dearie. Look, it's written here, Sudogda. I want ye to give me a paper. So they can't put me out."

Praskovya Ivanovna wanted to ask—what paper, and who were putting her out, but once the old woman had begun to pour out her troubles it was difficult to stop her.

"I don't rightly belong to the town. Aye, and I don't like it, either. But my girl lived in town. Lived here with her children, my grandchildren, that is. But we're all in God's hands, and she died, my girl did, and there were the children. So I came. Because someone had to look after them."

"And you did quite right to come, Granny."

"Aye—right. But now there's those as want to put me out."

"Put you out? Out of where?"

"Out o' that house. It's not down in my name, you see, it's written down for my daughter. And she's dead. They want the house, ye see, and I'm just an old woman, what can I do, so they're putting me out."

"But that's impossible," Praskovya Ivanovna burst out. "What about the children?"

"The children they'll put in a home, they say. Now what sort of a thing's that, where'll you find strangers as'll look after them better than I can, their own granny? But they want to take the last joy of my old age, my girl's children. Because they want the house. . . ."

Inside, Praskovya Ivanovna seethed. But this was the first request she had received as deputy. On the one hand she was not yet sure of her powers, and on the other—although she was inclined to believe the old woman, still you had to look into things. You couldn't take everything on trust, with the first word.

"Now, you go home and don't worry, Granny," she said quietly. "I won't leave it like that. I'll find out just how it all is, and see you're treated properly. Go along now, Granny."

The old woman seemed to droop. She went to the door, then turned back.

"And ye won't give me any paper?" she asked tremblingly. Then she turned again and trailed out, evidently feeling her visit was a failure.

A little while afterwards, the headmaster of the school came to Praskovya Ivanovna, to invite her to a parents' meeting.

"Here we are," he told the meeting, "Praskovya Ivanovna's come to join us today. For years I've been trying to get better lighting in the school. But people all pull different ways and nothing gets done. Meanwhile, the children can spoil their eyes. I suggest we ask Praskovya Ivanovna to help us."

"No need for any asking," said Praskovya Ivanovna, "I can see for myself how dark it is. I don't know how you've stood it so long."

Home she went, and rang up the factory director.

"Sergei Fyodorovich, how's it you can't give the children a decent light in the school? Can you call that light, what they've got? You'll have all their eyesight ruined in no time. You'll have to do something about it."

Sergei Fyodorovich laughed.

"I'm not the god of lightning, to throw electricity about. It's a transformer that's needed. A trans-for-mer! And several kilometres of wire. And I haven't got them. If you've taken this thing up, my advice is to start by calling a medical commission; let it draw up a report and then you can do something about it."

Praskovya Ivanovna began to work as weaving instructor, teaching the apprentices. This did not tie her down, she could leave the mill if her duties as deputy demanded it.

"I try and try, really I do," wailed a girl with cherry-black eyes and dimples. "But I *can't* seem to do it properly!"

"Don't try so hard, dear, take it easy and don't hurry," Praskovya Ivanovna advised. "You can go faster when you've learned to do it. But now, you just go along quietly and easily. It'll come to you."

Somebody called her to the telephone. It was the headmaster, so upset he could hardly speak.

"We've got ourselves into a fine mess. The commission's come and they're closing the school. You understand?—They've given us three days. Please help us, Praskovya Ivanovna."

It took all her powers of persuasion to induce the commission not to close the school, and only on the solemn undertaking that there would be proper lighting at once if not sooner.

The chairman of the regional executive listened to Praskovya Ivanovna with a smile.

"All that fuss about nothing! Couldn't the director settle it? A little thing like that? All that's needed is to increase the current—give it more juice."

"Oh no, there's something or other besides that. I don't know anything about electricity, but there's something'll have to be got from Moscow."

The chairman laughed.

"It's not as bad as that. I'll ring up the director. We'll get it fixed up."

"No, don't—at least, not now." Praskovya Ivanovna opened the door and called, "Ivan Pavlovich, come in here a minute," adding to the chairman, "I brought the power house manager with me, just in case. . . . Ivan Pavlovich, tell us what's needed, please, to give the school better lighting."

The next day an application was sent to Moscow, and in a few weeks the school windows shone.

Time passed on. The grain swelled and burst in the warm earth, and grass laid its carpet of green. The collective-farm grain grew tall and flowered. The heads filled and became heavy. Then came the time when leaves torn from trees made golden zigzags against the blue sky. And finally the cool, quiet snow covered everything—the grass, the flowers, the leaves.

At all seasons people came to Praskovya Ivanovna, bringing their cares, their worries, their troubles. And again, this time in Moscow, when the Supreme Soviet met, Praskovya Ivanovna asked whether there were not any rules or instructions for a deputy's work. And again she heard the same reply, "No, there's nothing of that kind, your one rule of guidance is your own conscience and good sense." It was not as easy as it sounded.

"My husband's gone off," said a weeping woman at the mill. "Help me find him. He's left me with the children on my hands. He's earning money somewhere, help me get what's my due from him."

"I'll find him for you," Praskovya Ivanovna promised. "Don't worry, I'll find him if he's at the bottom of the sea. Now stop crying. We'll ring up the court right away, set the machinery moving."

Then letters began coming in, with postmarks showing the trail the rascal had followed—Smolensk, Gomel, Baranovichi. Here he had been door-keeper, there a porter at the station, in another place an unskilled labourer. Finally a paper came from Kaliningrad region: "So-and-so works at the collective farm. In satisfaction of the claim, 746 kilograms of grain and 1,100 roubles in cash have been deducted from his pay."

Another time, however, a different reply came. "A. T. Samokhvalov has been convicted of misappropriation of public funds. There are no grounds for an appeal."

"And the way that wife of his cried, the way she vowed and swore he was as innocent as a child! Evidently you can't believe all the tears you see."

After a few eye-openers like that, Praskovya Ivanovna realized that kindness was an excellent thing, but good sense was certainly needed too. Before helping a person, you had to make sure that person was worth helping.

A burly, red-faced man, Trofim Zakharov, wanted to work at the mill and get a plot of land to build a house.

"Help me to get settled. I'll be grateful all my days. The director, he hums and haws, and won't say anything clear."

"Why did you leave the collective farm?"

"Well, it was my family . . . my wife. Troubles. You know the sort of thing that happens. And I don't want to go on living in the same place where she is."

"I'll see what I can do. Come back in a few days."

In a few days Trofim came.

"How about that business of mine? Have you settled it?"

"Don't be in such a hurry. There's business *and* business," said Praskovya Ivanovna, and her look was stern. "I've been to your farm."

Trofim's red face turned purple.

"You ran away from your job of chairman," she accused him. "You wanted a fat job. And you come here with lies. The Soviet authorities aren't going to help you in these tricks!"

It was not only requests that the post brought. Almost half the letters thanked her for her sympathy, her help. There were hundreds of letters like that, but Praskovya Ivanovna would never forget the first "thank you" she received from her very first visitor, the old woman from Sudogda.

"I want to tell you they are letting me be, I am in that house with the little ones. And I can live there to the end of my days. Thank you, my dear."

The jeep drove into a large village. The mud in the long, straight street was far worse than along the field and forest roads. A cart that drew aside to let us pass sank to the axles. But the car went on, lurching and jolting as though the mud covered a bed of boulders.

"We've arrived. This is Gromov Avenue," said the driver. "I tell you, it's just like Moscow except that the houses are smaller and the road trickier."

"Why Gromov—after the airman?"

"No, the chairman of the district executive's Gromov, it's after him. You can see how well it's paved. . . . D'you want to go to the executive offices or the canteen?"

"The hotel. We've got to get dry first of all."

"As you like. Is three roubles each too much? A taxi'd cost more. Whoa, there!"

The village where we found ourselves was called Nebyloye (Never-Was).

The collective farm hotel had only one bed free. We gave it to Seryoga and fixed ourselves up for the night in a cottage nearby. There was a room free, a small summer room with a square window and a tremendous number of little bottles on the floor. The house belonged to the village vet.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

Waking during the night, we heard the rain drumming steadily on the metal roof, splashing on the wet ground and in the puddles like a child slapping down his hands in play. The morning was grey as dusk, July had borrowed from autumn.

People were talking the other side of the wall.

"So far it's filling the barns," said one. "So far it's giving us millions. Helps the grass, and the wheat, and the buckwheat, and the potatoes most of all. Only hay time's near, if it keeps up like this all the grass'll rot."

"Don't hunt trouble. All summer we've been waiting for it and wanting it, now it's come and after two days you start with your if's and but's."

"Two days! Seems more like a week."

Our stout canvas capes evidently frightened off the rain, it began to slacken. Along the horizon the low grey covering drew aside to disclose a strip of blue.

The wind caught the edges of the clouds, pulling them away, peeling them off the sky as one peels the skin off a potato boiled in its jacket. Light and colour returned. It began to get warm, we took off our capes and carried them over our arms.

We were on our way to Kobelikha. The reason was, that Nebyloye district was "a district of hereditary herdsman," as the papers put it; for untold ages it had supplied them to all parts of central Russia. This, then, was the place where we would find the famous Vladimir horn-players, and of all the villages in those parts, Kobelikha was the one whose players were said to be the best. So that was our goal; we would get them to play two or three songs, and then return.

The path took us through water-meadows along a stream called the Tuma, through thick woods and buckwheat fields. Walking was pleasant. In the meadows we found hummocks thickly covered with wild pinks, rosy islands among the green. In the woods, great harebells grew along the path. As for the buckwheat—the very air over it seemed rosy with its flowering.

There's truth in the old saying—"two days' summer rain dries in one, an hour's rain in autumn takes a week to be gone." Now it was summer, and while we walked to Kobelikha the water dried off the path, the stems of grass straightened, and only the earth itself, still dark and soft, recalled the recent downpour.

After rain, weeding is easy—and the Kobelikha folks knew that well, they had all come out to weed the onions, whole fields of them.

"It's always been the onions we've lived on here," said one woman working close to the path. Straightening her back for a moment, she pushed her hair off her face with her arm (her hand was dark with earth) and followed us with her eyes as we walked on. Then she bent down to her work again.

The Kobelikha houses run in two rows to the River Kolokhsa, but stop short at the steep green hill leading down to it, as though afraid of slipping down to the water meadows.

Bees were swarming over one cottage, or rather its kitchen-garden; we could hear them a long way off. The cloud of insects gathered closer into a knot, smaller but darker.

"Manka, where are your eyes?" an old man shouted from the next-door cottage. "Go and get Katerina, quick! Tell her the swarm's going, I'll bang a bit."

Manka, a girl of about twelve, raced off through the village while the old man went into his house and came out again with a bucket and a stick. A noise alarms the bees and they hurry to alight, to settle somewhere close. But he had no chance to begin. While he was hurrying indoors, the bees finally drew together into a tight cluster, like a ragged sheepskin and flew off towards the sun. The old man watched them, bent-kneed, shading his eyes with one hand, the other holding the bucket, now no longer needed.

"There they go. Katerina'll be right upset, that she will. But it'll be a bit of luck for someone. Or mebbe they'll go to the woods, find a hollow tree or something. They can do that too."

By the Red Riverside farm offices we found members of the co-operative sitting on the grass, on logs, on anything handy, and we joined them. Then they went inside for a collective-farm meeting. We went with them.

I liked the way the chairman started, coming straight to the point without any waste of time on "topics of general interest."

"We begin mowing tomorrow. Let's decide where, from Lykov Boundary or from Dmitrov Meadow?"

There followed a few moments of confused noise; everybody had an opinion and wanted to voice it. Finally it was decided to start with Dmitrov Meadow, but then it came out that half the people had no scythes.

"Aren't there any in the shop?"

"The shop!" someone jeered. "For haymaking they've got in a fine stock of nails and hinges."

The meeting decided to send somebody to Moscow for scythes.

"Now there's something else we've got to settle. There are some who scamp the work on the hay sections, take off the top and leave half the grass standing. What shall we do with those—make them mow the section again or pay fifty per cent? In other words, hit their backs or their pockets?"

"Don't be in all that hurry with your hitting," shouted one man, and rose. "It's right, the grass isn't cut close. But why? Take a look at the scythes we get, they may be good and they may be bad, there's all sorts. If you start with your hitting, you've got to know where."

This idea, that it might not be the mower but his scythe that was at fault, produced a strong impression. The chairman had to rap the inkwell.

"You use the same scythes on your own plots, don't you? But there's not a blade left there."

"Aye, but there we're only thinking of getting the grass in, on the sections we're thinking of workdays.¹"

Then they began to read out a long list of working teams. While they are engaged in this, I will explain why I do not like the section system in haymaking.

As far back as human memory goes, haymaking has been a festive time in the villages. The reason is simple: it was the one kind of farm work done by all together, all working in harmony, a real social occasion. The whole year round the peasant grubbed his own bit of land, but at haymaking time he went out with the rest of the village, they took their places in the line, they had competitions and when they stopped to rest the young fellows fooled around, so that it was a real holiday. At midday all the women and girls would come out to turn the hay and pile it into cocks, and when evening came they went home singing. And it was this tradition that was broken: instead of working together, vying with one another and having a good time generally, each man got his section to mow alone. This was considered more productive, but any gain was far outweighed by a loss of something more important, that gay swing in the work. The purpose had been to make sure that no grass was left unreaped, that all was brought in. But with the former way, not a single blade had ever been left on the meadows.

Meanwhile, the meeting continued.

¹ A payment unit when the year's profits are shared; on some jobs it is reckoned according to the section of land worked.—Tr.

"You remember, we sent a letter to Grandad Makhmud Eivazov, he's a hundred and forty-seven."

Yes, they remembered that letter; the meeting livened up. There was a murmur of interest.

"Well, we've had a reply from Grandad Makhmud," and the chairman read out the letter in which the old Azerbaidjanian thanked them for their congratulations and wished them all the best. And although it was clear that the letter had been written for him, the whole thing was rather moving. They had heard of this ancient, they had written to him and now the whole membership of the farm listened to his reply. There was something heart-warming about it, even about the detail that the chairman did not refer to him formally as Comrade Eivazov, but simply called him Grandad Makhmud.

At the beginning of the meeting we had passed a note up to the chairman and now he announced: "Here's something else. We've visitors who're interested in our horn-players. So any of you who've got horns, it would be good if you'd go off home and get them, let these Moscow folks hear what our playing sounds like."

The meeting was closed and the people left the office. But not all, about fifteen or so remained, and we got them talking about horns.

"Aye, we used to have players here, and good ones. The Shibrovs, now—they went to the Coronation to play before the tsar."

"Where are they?"

"Dead, long ago. But the son's still here. Vanka, run and tell Shibrov to come."

"Aye, and there was Petrukha Luzhov, he played in Moscow for Maxim Gorky. And I don't know if it's true or not, but they say Gorky had tears in his eyes—cried, he did. And he gave Petrukha a present and Petrukha gave him his horn."

"Where's Petrukha?"

"He's living in Noginsk. There were three brothers, all of them played the horn. Ivan's a colonel in the army now, he'll have forgotten what a horn sounds like, but Pavlukha, he's at home. Vaska, tell Pavlukha to come back and bring his horn, too."

"And there were the Belov brothers, they played in Moscow for the radio. And there were plenty more, there was Mishka Shalnov, and the Shokhins. . . . But a lot of them got killed. In the war."

"But who've you got now that plays?"

"There's Korkin and Shishkin, they still play a bit. They'd play more, but they haven't the teeth, they're getting old."

"But what have teeth got to do with it?"

"Eh, teeth—that's the most important thing. You don't blow just anyhow, it has to be done the right way. And if your teeth are done, you're done too."

"Take me, now," said a man of forty or forty-five. Great, troubled eyes shone strangely from his unshaven face. "A shell splinter knocked out a tooth in the war," and he tapped his yellowed upper. "I came back home and wanted to

go herding again. But how could I be a herd without a horn? That's not the way I'm used to. There's some go blowing in a bottle these days, but that's never been our way, it's got to be a horn, and a box-wood one, maple won't do for me. And I'd got one all right, it had been waiting for me all through the war. Well, I took it and started to blow, but the tunes wouldn't come. Now, what was that but the tooth? So I cut a chip from a lime-tree, whittled it down and stuck it in, in place of the tooth. And what d'ye think? The tunes came fine. So I just carried that wooden tooth in my pocket. I'd play, and then wrap it up and back in my pocket again.

"Aye. On Thursdays we used to have a competition, we'd all come, we herds-men, from the villages and hamlets, and sit down in a row, a hundred and twenty of us, and play. There'd be others, too, without horns, but how could you tell if they were any good? But when you started off playing, anyone could see what you were worth right away. The muzhiks would go up and down the line, muzhiks from all round, and choose. And a good player, there'd be quarrels about him and fights too, sometimes. And he'd be paid more, because the women like our tunes. At dawn you start up with *In the Woods* or *The Casket* or something sad-like, when the dew's on the grass you could hear it a long way. And all the women come out to milk and there you were playing. It was real pretty, that. Of course, you can blow in a bottle too. There's plenty do. Aye, and a donkey can bray, if it comes to that, and to my mind he does it better." That brought a general laugh. "But you must make some sort of sounds. You can't be a herdsman without."

"Play something now. I've not heard the horn since I was a boy, and they"—I indicated my companions—"they've never heard it at all."

"Nay, but we'd have to get tuned in, try it a bit together, like. We won't get the right music without that. There's none of us played a long time now. And there's our teeth."

"But the young ones?"

"Eh, the young ones! They're no good. Aye, and there's no more horns, either. There was one used to make them, a real master craftsman, lived over by Sacred Hill, right nearby. He'd make ye any kind, box-wood, whatever ye want."

"Play something without tuning in, just to let us hear."

"Eh, no, that won't do at all. One's got to be bass, another on the thick 'un, the next on the medium and the fourth on the tweedle."

"The what?"

"The tweedle, tweedle up above, you know."

"But when the herdsmen were out they were alone and each played to himself. Why can't one of you do that now, the way you did in your young days?"

At this moment, some people came bringing horns. I took one of them in my hand—a simple instrument made of one piece of box-wood. It was about forty centimetres long, its narrow end the thickness of your thumb, the broad end that of a bottle bottom. Perhaps even narrower. A row of holes ran down the side, and it had ornamental carvings: some have a serrated pattern, others half-moons linked. The years had given it a dark polish. And the notes produced from this

bit of wood could amaze people in other lands (Vladimir horn-players once went to London!) or bring tears to the eyes of Maxim Gorky, or give enjoyment to Russian farm women, because in colouring and character they had no equal.

Shibrov placed a horn in the corner of his mouth, rose and drew in a deep breath, swelling like a turkey-cock till his whole face was suffused, and then drew in still more, as though only the ultimate limit of near-apoplexy could produce a tune; finally, with expectation at its height, the horn produced a hoarse moan.

"Wait a bit, mebbe there's something got into it. Aye, and I could wet it, too, it's easier when it's a bit wet."

Something had got into it—a piece of straw thrust through the horn produced a dead beetle. A bucket of water was brought and the horn was dipped into it. Old horn-players tried one after the other, but all they could manage was broken-off fragments, sometimes hoarse, sometime shrill. Then they decided to try a quartette—bass, thick 'un, medium, and tweedle; the result was a cacophony that any American jazz band might have envied.

"Nay, it's no good. We've got out o' the way of it. Aye, and we've not got the teeth, and we're not tuned in together. . . . It's all gone."

Here I must anticipate by a few days, to tell you how we did nevertheless hear real Vladimir horn-playing. It was near Suzdal. Seryoga stopped there to draw some picturesque bits, and we went on to see Kideksha.

Four kilometres from Suzdal, at the confluence of the Kamenka and the Nerl, an ancient church stands on the green bank, the first building of white stone in north-east Russ. It bears the names of Princes Boris and Gleb. Yuri Dolgoruky, the founder of Moscow, buried his daughter Yefrosinia there, his son Boris and Boris' wife Maria.

We found the church not only preserved but restored, in excellent condition, just as though it had been built not in 1152 but in 1952. It stood on the green bank, freshly whitewashed, reflected in the light, quiet water of the Nerl. From the rise we had a splendid view along the river. Just below us occasional lorries picked a cautious way across a wooden bridge. Evening was drawing on, and the heavy clouds that had drifted over brought dusk down early. But the church seemed to shine with a light of its own against the lowering grey sky. Have you ever noticed how the insulators in telegraph poles gleam as the sky darkens before heavy rain? This was the same, only it was not a mere insulator, it was a big, handsome building.

There was that hush that always precedes a storm. At these times any sound, even from a neighbouring village—the rattle of a bucket against a pump, the cackling of a goose, the creaking of cart-wheels—can be heard for a long distance. It was in this quietness that the notes of a horn came to us. It sounded quite close by, from the other side of a hill. We needed only to cross the river, climb a little way and we would see the player. And he was playing that tune full of trills, *Raspberries in the Garden*.

We hurried over the wooden bridge and crossed the meadow, trying to keep the direction we had marked, for the playing had now stopped. Over the hill lay a deep, wide gully with clay sides. Trickles of rain-water had cut winding run-

nels down them and carried myriads of small coloured stones to the bottom. We could see the hoof-prints of cattle, sheep and goats everywhere. On the right the gully widened, leading back to the Nerl, and on the left it vanished among scrub and bushes, leading to the distant forest. We turned left.

Meanwhile, the heavy clouds had been torn to shreds as one tears up an unpleasant letter, casting the fragments to the wind. These dark fragments were flying across the sky, chasing one another, tumbling and twisting in their flight. A few drops fell, but the heavy rain had evidently passed over. It became much lighter.

Kideksha and the Suzdal church behind us receded into the distance, as though we had turned a pair of field-glasses the wrong way. Now its cupolas looked like toys against the background of dark sky.

We walked about three kilometres from Kideksha and still we found no herd. We had plunged into the bushes and visibility was reduced to about ten paces. When we got through them we found ourselves facing the pine woods, with the thatched roofs of a village across the rye fields to our left.

We might have decided to spend the night there, for it was getting late, had we not heard the horn again—this time behind us, in the gully. A quarter of an hour later we climbed a rise and saw a picture. A man in a canvas cloak and army cap was walking across the twilight field—slowly, without looking round, and just as quietly the scattered herd followed. Our appearance surprised the herdsman, for there were no roads or paths anywhere near.

"Have you lost your way? You're making for Suzdal, likely?"

"Yes. But we didn't lose our way. We heard the horn, it sounded so good we turned off to listen. We kept on and on, couldn't find where you were."

"So that's it," laughed the herdsman and touched his pouch, from which the end of a horn emerged—a box-wood horn, we knew something about it now. "So you're fond of our music?"

We walked along in front of the herd, talking. The herdsman was anxious to get to the village before sunset, but the rain changed its mind and came back, so we took shelter in the bushes, half-sitting, half-lying on the damp grass.

"We're not so badly off, at that," said our new acquaintance (his name was Vasili Ivanovich Sholokhov), "the fox took shelter under a harrow—it'll keep a few of the drops off, it said. This won't be much, just a spatter, the big clouds have gone."

There was no wind under the bushes, and the smoke from his cigarette hung before us as though we were indoors.

"I've been herding since I was eight," said Vasili Ivanovich, in answer to our questions. "I've worked all over, Yaroslavl way, and Kostroma, and Moscow, and Ivanovo, and Gorky—everywhere. If you offered me other work I wouldn't take it. And the horn—I've played that in Moscow."

"In Moscow—where?"

"In that Scientists' Club, and the Writers' Club, and all sorts of halls and theatres. And they liked it, clapped real hard. Of course, we did our best too.



They'd got tired of the violins, but our horns—just suited them, the way you want a bit of plain rye bread when you've been eating too much cake."

"But how was it you went to Moscow?"

"That's a long story." He crushed out his cigarette on the ground and rose. "I'll tell you on the way, it's getting late. . . . When I was a young lad, I served my time in the army. Well, I got real homesick, and I wrote and asked them to send me my horn, I'd play a bit, I thought, and it'd ease me. So one day when we'd been swimming and were lying on the bank, sun-bathing and that, I pulled out my horn and started playing. And you should have seen it—they all came and stood round, listening. And me, I didn't take any notice but just went on as if they weren't there. But then all of a sudden they stood back, it was one of the officers had come. He listened a bit, then he took the horn and sort of turned it round and round in his hands. 'What's that?' he said, 'where's it come from?' Well, I told him about it, that I'd got it sent from home. 'And is there anything else you can play?' he asked. 'I've got ears in my head,' I told him, 'tell me what you want and I'll play it.' He told me to play *Through the Lowlands and the Heights*. I played *Through the Lowlands and the Heights*. 'Good man, he said, 'are there any more here from your parts that know how to play?' 'Aye, that there are,' I said and told him the names. Well, next thing they were given short leave, sent home, that is, to fetch their horns, and we got a quartette together. And whenever there was an amateur concert, or some sort of free evening for amusement, or a get-together of one kind or another—we were right there on the stage. But that wasn't all. That officer, he got a teacher sent down from Moscow, to teach us a bit more about music. Eh, and didn't he put us through it, like drill, it was. He'd make us play the same note fifty times.

"Then manoeuvres started, and Voroshilov and Budyonny came to inspect us. Of course, we had to put our best foot foremost with a concert—guests like that! We horn players came out on to the stage, and there they were, Voroshilov

and Budyonny, right in the front row. Well, we sort of lost ourselves a bit at first, nervous like. But then it passed off. When you're doing something you know, you soon stop being nervous. So we played, and they, Voroshilov and Budyonny, they sat there and laughed, held their sides, they did. And after that we were sent to Moscow. We were there two years, played at all sorts of concerts. And the way folks clapped, better than they did for Lemeshev or Kozlovsky. I might have gone on like that, playing, that is, doesn't break your back, and there's money in it, but I sort of hankered for home."

"Are you the only one who plays round these parts, or are there others?"

"Nay, I'm not the only one, you'll find others here and there. A while ago there was an amateur contest for the district, and we went to play. And there was one of those film actors there, quite a big man, they say. He liked us too. Took us to the 'Klyazma,' that's a restaurant. We'd drink a bit and eat a bit and drink a bit and then play some more. Aye, he liked us fine. 'I'll take you to Moscow, lads,' he said. 'Others ought to hear you too, or you'll all die off and that'll be the end of it. I'll record you on a tape,' he said, 'And we'll make a picture of you, so you'll be remembered.' . . . Well, and would you like me to play you something else? A *krakovyak*, mebbe?" And Vasili Ivanovich played one with spirit.

He played very well, but it must be admitted that the horn is best heard at a distance, over a hill, or across the woods or fields. And especially at dawn. Close at hand, it is rather loud and piercing.

As I said, in relating this I have anticipated somewhat.

Meanwhile, we said good-bye to the Kobelikha horn players of whom not one could play any more. "It's no good," they said, "we've got out of the way of it. Aye, and we've not got the teeth, and we're not tuned in together."

Still, we had not wasted our time. In the first place, we had heard the collective-farm meeting; secondly, we had met some grand people and learned a great deal, and thirdly, we had been given a splendid box-wood horn each as a souvenir—a horn which in twenty years' time would be as rare as a live mammoth.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

Every tree has its own value.

When the wind blows you can smell the lime flowers for miles around. They pour an invisible stream of sweet honeylike perfume into the scents of July. On a quiet day, countless bees find work in them. An old tree, pale with blossom, literally hums with the bees flickering among its leaves. More honey is gathered from a single lime-tree than from a hectare of buckwheat.

The bird-cherry does not bring these solid benefits, but it flowers early, when the earth awakens in the first flush of springtime. It is the fragrant accompaniment of romance, of early love and secret meetings.

But bird-cherry and lilac flower die, the grass dries and the leaves turn yellow. The bees are taken inside. The fading tints of autumn hold sway, and

none of the trees and bushes which adorned the earth in summer can boast their beauty now. When September comes, who notices that bird-cherry or the jasmine, who has eyes for the wild rose?

But there is another tree. In springtime we hardly notice it, in July, too, it attracts no attention. It merely helps to form a neutral green background for the gay blossoms. Then, as autumn draws nearer, it begins to stand out, and when it seems there is nothing left to gladden the eye, the rowan flames in red clusters, the theme of many a lovely song. First amber, then orange, then brilliant crimson, they glow among the filigree of leaves, and looking at them, one forgets the wild rose and the jasmine.

As soon as the rowan berries turn yellow, the children use them for their play. In August all the little girls make amber necklaces of juicy rowan berries. But sometimes when one of them is going to pull a heavy bunch, an older girl will stop her with the warning. "You mustn't touch those, it's a Nevezhino tree."

When we were children we used to argue fiercely about that name. Some called them "Nevezhino rowans," others insisted the name was "Nezhin." When we asked the grown-ups they said it was "Nevezhino." But when we went into the shop to look at the bottles of rowan wine, the label said "Nezhin." Who was right?

When we argued, we never even guessed two things—first, that learned people argued about the same thing, and second, that the village of Nevezhino, after which that kind of rowan was named, was only twenty kilometres away.

Some learned men wrote that round about the town of Nezhin people had long cultivated the sweet rowan used for making the wine known as Nezhin Rowan Wine. But others wrote that "in the Vladimir and Ivanovo regions people cultivate what is known as the Nevezhino sweet rowan, named after the village of Nevezhino, Nebyloye district, Vladimir region, which is thought to be the birthplace of this kind of rowan."

Whose fault was this confusion, how could it be sorted out?

A commission went to Nezhin, with a leading agricultural expert at the head. And here is an excerpt from its report.

"With the assistance of local experts we established that no sweet rowan-trees are cultivated in Nezhin district or in Chernigov region in general, and never have been. Later, from collective-farm members in the village of Nevezhino and others in that district who used to supply the Moscow wine-merchant Smirnov, it was established that the latter, wishing to conceal the actual source of his berries from competitors, altered the name of his wine from 'Nevezhino Rowan' to 'Nezhin Rowan,' in this way misleading them."

The next morning it was raining again, as it did all these days. But we already knew that by ten it usually cleared up, and we waited patiently. Sure enough the wind strengthened and carried the low-lying clouds away over the horizon. An upper layer still remained, but no rain fell from them.

We followed a slippery path from Nebyloye to Nevezhino. It crossed low fields and rose to enter a thick oak wood, still dripping from the rain. Heavy

drops descended from the upper branches, striking various notes as they fell from leaf to leaf, to sink silently at last into the tall grass. Here and there we found mushrooms, the first we had seen.

Nevezhino looked from the distance like the wing of a bird. Its edge was higher than the centre because of a gully that cut through it, dividing it in half. We knew at once that we had come to the right place, for every cottage stood in a square plot edged with rowan-trees. In the middle there might be apple, cherry and plum-trees, or current and sloe bushes, and occasionally potatoes. But all these were of lower growth, so the village seemed to be standing in a forest of rowans. Some of them were real giants. The trunk, thicker than arms' span, rose twenty metres to support a spreading crown of long leaves that the damp wind tossed like a girl's hair. Frequently two or three trunks grew from one root, parting gradually as they rose, forming a tremendous green tent. Among these giants stood slender young rowans with thin, straight trunks and leaves lighter in tint. And if one looked more closely, down below one could see the children of the rowan family, with a few small leaves. The ground around these was well hoed and probably fertilized; evidently the youngest generation was the object of especial care.

Alexander Ivanovich Ustinov was the man in charge of the collective-farm orchards. He was rather short, with watery eyes and a small thin mouth from which several front teeth were missing, so that his lips were sucked in and the reddish stubble covering his face met over them.

"How do you do? I'll tell you anything you want, and glad to. What interests you in particular?"

"One thing that's interesting is that we're actually in the village of Nevezhino. Because there's a real argument about whether the village even exists, and whether it's right or wrong to call your rowans Nevezhino rowans."

"Why, our muzhiks have been growing these rowans all their lives and their grandfathers before them. There's a hundred trees in every garden. It all started with a shepherd—Shelkunov, his name was. He wasn't quite all there, a bit light in the upper story, you understand, and he was the one that found that rowan in the woods. Have you come from Nebyloye? Well, you've come through that very wood, then. That's the one where he found it. He transplanted it into his garden, and a neighbour got one from him, and then it went on to another neighbour and so through the whole village."

"Did you know Shelkunov yourself?"

"I'd have had a job, he lived two hundred years ago, or maybe three. I've heard folks tell of it. The tale's come down from father to son, you know the way it is. Aye, our rowans are famous. In the old times it was mostly the herdsmen who took them to other places. When they went far afield, folks would have heard of our trees and they'd start asking—bring us some, bring some seedlings. But all the same they never took on."

"Why was that—the soil? Or the climate, maybe?"

"No, it was the sweet berries. Soon's they began to form, folks would go after them—like savages, break the branches off. They were used to the ordinary

kind, but our berries are big and juicy. Experts have come here and measured 'em, over a centimetre round, they are. And they found all sorts of things in them, too—sugar and some sort of apple acid, and vitamin C and vitamin A—seems they're as good as lemons or oranges for vitamins."

"What do you do with them?"

"In the old times we used to sell them. Smirnov was a winemaker, he'd buy up the harvest in a whole orchard, buy it on the root, as we say, and put his watchman there. It was him got the name all mixed up. Wanted to keep our village secret, and made up a tale the berries came from Nezhin. Aye, only three years ago a winery in Vladimir bought a hundred and sixty tons. We take them to market, too."

"Do they sell well?"

"It's mostly the better-off folks buy them, for jam and pickles."

"What else can you make with them?"

"Well, we dry them, and make berry wine of them. When they're dried they're like raisins. But try some."

His wife put a bowl on the table filled with dark berries. We took a few, expecting them to be sour and bitter, but found instead that they were sweet, with a delicate flavour.

"And we preserve them with malt, liquorice, that is, that's for dessert. And we put them in buns, and make *kvass* of them—you can use 'em for anything you want, for jam and such like too, of course. But I like them best my own way. In autumn I put a lot of them in the shed or barn—break them off together with the leaves, so they're on a sort of plate of green, they don't wither so much. Leave them till the frost touches 'em. Even the ordinary wild rowan berries, the ones in the woods, are grand when the frost's touched them, but ours—there's nothing like them."

"So it's well worth while growing them?"

"Worth while? That it is! In these northern parts there's not much fruit. But these, they're good as any fruit you could name. Of course, on the market they don't fetch the price apples do, but they bear a crop every year. And they can stand the frost. I sent some to Kamchatka, and they didn't know how to thank us. Took well, looks like. And if they can grow in Kamchatka, they'll grow anywhere."

"What made you think of sending them out there?"

"They asked for them. But I can show you—where're those letters, now?"

Alexander Ivanovich opened a drawer, fumbled for a moment and then drew out a pile of letters fastened together. We took them and read: "Dear Comrade Ustinov, I have heard a great deal about the Nevezhino rowan. I am a keen gardener and want very much to have one of them. For about three years I have been applying to nurseries and every time I have been told there werenone. . . ."

"Dear Alexander Ivanovich, our institute is sending a fruit expert to you for seedlings of the Nevezhino rowan. We have to provide 1,500 to 2,000 of them. . . ."

"We would be very much obliged if you would send seeds or seedlings of your famous Nevezhino rowan for our school garden, and also for the teacher Semyonov personally. . . ."

There was no end of these letters.

"How did they find out about you, Alexander Ivanovich?"

"I was in the papers one time, they called me an experimental collective-farm gardener following Michurin methods."

"So you're an experimental gardener too, are you?"

"The paper said so, I suppose they know what they're talking about."

"And do you send seedlings to all that ask?"

"Why not? Let our rowans travel. Though now it's mostly Sobinka who takes care of such demands."

"How's that? Are there other experimental gardeners in Sobinka, like you?"

"No, it's a special centre for our Nevezhino rowans—there's folks who study them, and breed them—so it'll all be scientific, properly done, so there'll be more and more of them. If you find yourselves in those parts you should go and take a look, they're doing it in a big way, I've heard."

The orchard was full of bees. They swooped over the high fence and down to their hives, blocking the path—for one does not dispute right-of-way with those creatures!

"What d'you want me to show you? You've seen rowans before, surely? It's the berries are different with ours, their size and flavour, but the trees look just like the wild ones, you could never tell the difference. Come back again when the berries are ripe. Maybe you'd like a sapling or two to plant? Come any time, I'll pick the best for you, your grandchildren'll say thank you for them. Of course, for them as don't understand, the rowan isn't a berry. But for those as do—it's handsome and it's got its use too. Every tree has its own value."

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

That day held out no hope of the rain clearing away, so the mail lorry with its canvas cover was very welcome. We crawled in under this cover and very soon discovered that it had a large number of small holes. At first we thought little of them. But as the cover sagged, rain-water began to gather in it. With the movement of the lorry it flowed here and there, which ensured its even distribution through all the holes. And with the lurching of the lorry we ourselves were thrown from side to side, or backward and forward, as briskly as the water.

Besides us three, there were two girls, a young fellow, and an older man with two baskets on his way to sell mushrooms and berries at the market. Among all of us vagabonds and light-pockets, he represented solid private trade. And as though conscious of it, he sat apart, in a corner, his arms holding his baskets as steady as possible.

The back part of the cover was raised over an iron rod, so the landscape seemed to be set into a frame for our admiration. The upper half of the picture

was composed of grey clouds like dirty cotton-wool, the lower half was the greasy black of wet soil. Two lines of dully gleaming puddles, marking the ruts on the road, provided variety. The nearer puddles heaved as the water ejected by our lorry wheels trickled back in the muddy streams.

Sometimes the lorry began slipping gently to one side, its wheels turning with as much effect as though it were hoisted up on a crane. The surface, wet and greasy, formed a fine lubricant between the tyres and the harder layer below. Every rise had to be stormed. One took us half an hour to conquer. We would back some distance and make a rush at it, after digging the mud away with spades and scattering stones. Incidentally, I say "we," but actually this was done not so much by us passengers as by the driver and the girl in charge of the mail.

And still the rain kept up, as though it would never stop.

The next rise took only twenty minutes, and we hoped that it would continue in descending progression. But the opposite happened.

After an unsuccessful attempt to storm a rise, the lorry slid back and took up a position across the road with an air of "here I am, here I stop." The driver and the girl, with the rest of us helping, dug under the wheels and managed to get the lorry facing the way we were going. But the second attempt ended the same way, the lorry sliding down backwards with a ninety degrees turn.

Then Seryoga took off his boots, rolled up his trousers and plunged boldly into the mud. The young fellow followed. Splashing and knocking came from underneath, mingled with curses. Everyone joined in the effort to get the lorry going. Only the man with the baskets stopped where he was.

A hummock had to be dug away, and stones scattered in front of the wheels to give them a grip. We took turns at digging, as there was only one spade, but carrying stones from the piles by the roadside could be done by any number.

We selected the flattest stones, and laid them one after the other to form a track. The driver rinsed his hands and climbed inside. Then we all took hold to push—preferably at the sides, since the wheels sent up a shower of stones and mud.

But each attempt ended the same way—the wheels slipped off the stones, hurled them in all directions, and settled a little deeper in the sticky mud.

"We must make the track wider."

The excavation work we had already done could have been measured in cubic metres. An hour and a half passed, two hours. At last even the representative of private trade could not sit inactive any longer, or perhaps he was cold and bored. Be that as it may, he raised his collar, climbed down, went a little aside and gave us useful advice, such as "It might be worth while going to the woods and cutting branches."

I would not venture to say whether it was really an accident when a spadeful of mud (the driver was digging) struck the rubber-clad shoulder of the dispenser of advice, a goodly portion covering his ear and cheek. He spluttered angrily, but the driver turned away and continued stolidly digging.

When we stopped for a rest and a smoke, there was a good deal of indignant comment about the roads in general. The driver said a hundred kilometres of such roads used up several hundred litres of petrol, in other words, a tremendous amount was being wasted. In addition, the engine wore out five times faster, not to mention the tyres. If one reckoned it all up in roubles, it would be much cheaper to build a new road.

And what about thousands of people's wasted time? And the drivers' nerves? Of course, they don't reckon nerves in ledgers, but they ought to be reckoned somewhere.

When you drive along a dry, dusty road in summer, nearly the whole way you see sticks and poles, straw, twigs and stones half sunk in the ground, and you know folks have been having the sort of struggles we had. Whether in winter or summer, spring or autumn, I have found myself stuck like this, along with the others, and I have seen others stuck the same way. I remember what the chairman of our Ratislav collective farm used to say, "I've got cars and lorries," he said, "but I don't use them more than two or three months a year. The rest of the time they're standing—either at home or stuck somewhere in the mud."

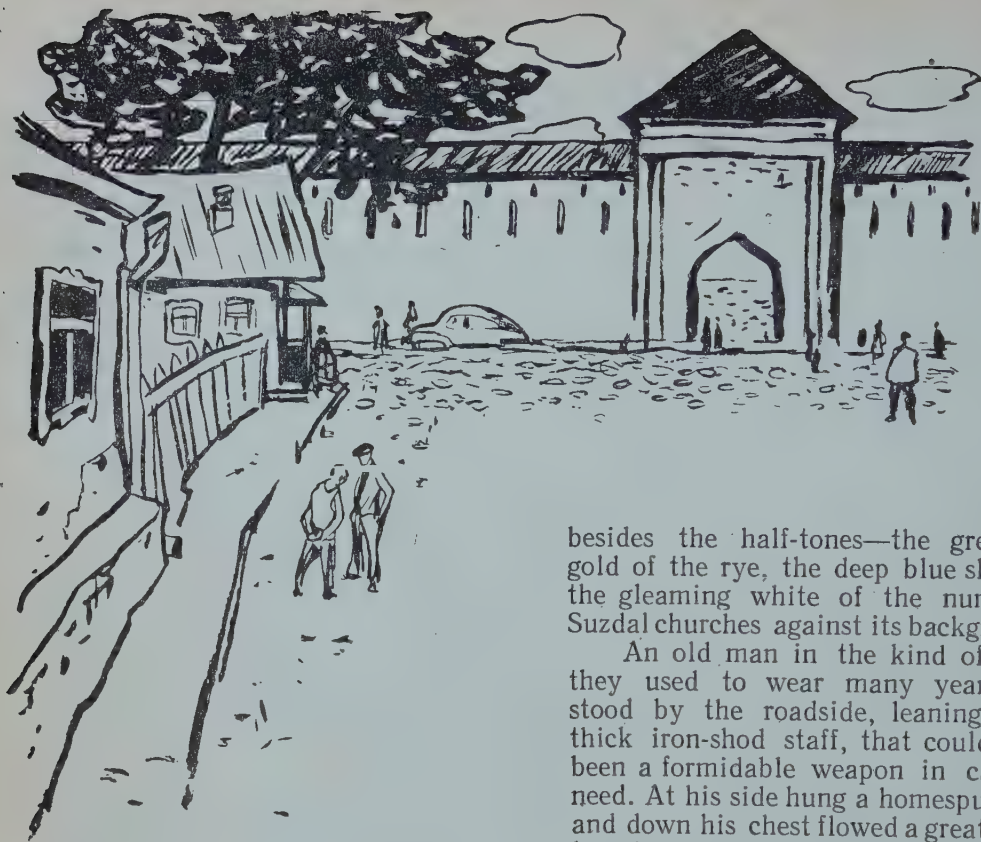
"Well, so there it is," said the driver, and put on his jacket. "Thank you for helping. We've done all we can. Can't do any more. I'll wait till someone comes who can pull me out, and if they don't, I'll ask the farm for a tractor. Stop here with me if you want, and if you don't, try your luck on foot. I may be here till tomorrow. The mail will be late, can't be helped."

We said good-bye warmly to the driver and went on our way, leaving the muddy road for the wet grass of the glades.

The trader crawled back to his baskets in the lorry.

After dinner it began to clear up and our spirits rose. It was a pity that tired and wet as we were, slipping and sliding along the muddy path, our eyes were usually on our toiling feet rather than our surroundings, because each time the clouds lifted for a moment the horizon receded and we stood in the midst of wide green spaces. The next moment the world narrowed once more to the small patch of dirty path and our own feet trying to leave it behind and failing, because it travelled with us. If that vaster world has left memories of strangely shaped clouds, a pretty cluster of trees and a bell-tower rising from the rye fields, the nearer world showed us crushed blades of grass, a trickle of rain-water the width of my hand, and a straw stuck to the sole of my boot by caked mud. And so we wandered, passing from one world to the other.

At last, however, we raised our eyes and stopped, enchanted. The path turned slightly and cut straight through the tall thick rye. Far away, a white tower rose topped by an onion-shaped blue bulb, and beside it another with the bulb gilded, then five slender towers with their onion tops in a cluster, then to the left the thin finger of a bell-tower, and still further left the pink fortress-like walls of a monastery with its own towers, then more and more bell-towers and churches rising from the rye. They formed a long chain so that the eye could not embrace them all at once, one had to look to the right and to the left. That part of the sky was clear and blue, so we saw a fairy picture in three colours,



besides the half-tones—the greenish-gold of the rye, the deep blue sky and the gleaming white of the numerous Suzdal churches against its background.

An old man in the kind of coats they used to wear many years ago stood by the roadside, leaning on a thick iron-shod staff, that could have been a formidable weapon in case of need. At his side hung a homespun bag, and down his chest flowed a great white beard that stirred in the breeze. The staff was a long one and the old man

stood upright as he leaned on it, his legs in their high leather boots spread wide, and looked along the road to see if there was a lorry in sight. He stood, this stately figure, against the enchanted background of rye fields and the Suzdal towers, and the camera leaped into my hands of itself.

I photographed him with a real reporter's eagerness, from all angles, always trying to catch the most important thing—that wonderful waving white beard. And the old man stood and permitted it, without blinking an eyelid or moving a finger.

Soon the vegetable plots began, with onions everywhere, and no lack of tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and cabbage. The whole plain was filled with these vegetable plots. Then a few steps up-hill—and we found ourselves in the main street of Suzdal. Amazingly enough, the hotel had rooms vacant, and very decent ones too, and the local inn reminded us of a restaurant in town.

As we sat there in comfort, we wondered whether our lorry had managed to crawl out of the hole, or whether the driver and the mail-girl, cold and wet, were still shivering on the driving seat.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH TO THE THIRTIETH DAY

Well, so we halted in Suzdal.

It is customary to assume that a town starts with something in the nature of outskirts; it is customary to assume that a town has a railway station; it is customary to assume that a town with any self-respect must have at least one factory, even if it is hardly worth the name, or at any rate something which can be termed industry.

Suzdal has none of these.

Without factory chimneys, without a railway, without imposing urban buildings, Suzdal stands lost among the grain of the Vladimir fields. Church towers and cupolas rise up from the grain. It flows right up to the town, almost washing against the first houses as it does round villages, and the water meadows follow the river Kamenka into the very centre.

There are side-streets completely overgrown with grass. A narrow track runs where the pavement would be, but the rest is green. Look down one of these; it is empty—no cars, no pedestrians. A couple of children may come running out to play or turn somersaults in the middle of the road. Look farther, and the street ends with a monastery or church. The windows of the houses are carved, and flowers stand on the sills. Nearly every house has its flower-garden and kitchen-garden. Everything is very quiet and cosy.

Suzdal is being restored. Many of its monasteries and other buildings are to look as they did long, long ago, when they were new. Alexei Dmitrievich Varganov is in charge of the work.

We had heard a great deal in Moscow about this man who has devoted all his knowledge and endeavour, in fact his whole life, to Suzdal. In Moscow, experts in all that is ancient, even the most prominent architects, historians and artists, know Varganov as a man with the most detailed information and penetration. They never say, "We must go to Suzdal," they say, "We must go to Varganov."

"Gold inlay from the pre-Mongolian period? Varganov's got it, in Nativity of the Virgin Cathedral."

"Peter the Great's wife—Avdotia Lopukhina? She was held at Varganov's, in the Pokrovsky Monastery."

In the Lenin Library catalogues, Varganov is listed as the author of many books on Suzdal architecture.

The rooms of the former Arch-Hierarch lie behind high brick walls. You pass beneath a vaulted archway and find yourself in something like a clear, light apiary. The sun pours down, there is a warm smell of honey and bees everywhere. All this is the result of the sweet-smelling flowers that fill the courtyard. These are particularly thick around the Monomakh Cathedral.

"Varganov? He may be in the museum office."

"Alexei Dmitrievich? He'll be somewhere near the bricklayers."

"The director of the museum? He may be with the carpenters."



"You want the boss? He's taken a sightseeing party along the town wall. If you hurry you can catch him up."

The party were sitting on the grass at the very edge of the broad wall—young men and girls, most of them in sports outfits. In front of them the ground fell away steeply to a loop in the river. On the low bank opposite there was a small round hill, as though somebody had dropped a hat there. On it rose a white church and a dark tree.

Among the young people stood a rather short, slender man in a worn grey jacket. His thin clean-shaven face topped by a mass of curly dark hair looked much younger than his fifty years.

Evidently he had been telling the party a great many interesting things, for as we came up a tall, dark-haired girl shouted right in his ear: "You ought to write about all this, you know such a lot!"

"I try to, but it doesn't come out. The critics go for me in the papers. I write everything plainly, and they say that's not right, I ought to use fine language, like 'the mists dispersed and the cupola shone like the risen sun.' I've been asked to write a book about the district too. When it comes to history I've got everything clear and in order, but I can't seem to catch up with the present time. I write something and take it along to show and they shrug their shoulders and say, 'But Alexei Dmitrievich, the cows in Suzdal district have given twice as much milk as that for a long time now,' I change it all, but while I'm doing the cows have got ahead of me again. But if you've any questions, better write them down instead of shouting." And he continued his lecture—but in an ordinary tone, not raising his voice as deaf people so often do.

"Suzdal is much older than most Russian towns, including Vladimir, not to mention Moscow. When it first came into being is not known, nor is the reason for its name, Suzdal. The Slavophile assumption that it came from one of the words arising from 'suzhdenie' (judgement, or discussion), is, of course, a myth. A sober estimation shows that Suzdal is a name of pre-Slav origin, like the Nerl which flows close by, and the Klyazma. And like these, the original meaning of the word is sought in vain.

"But if this is beyond us, a more important point is absolutely clear—why Suzdal was first built here, and why it later became the capital of a big principality.

"If you possess any imagination, and you should, you can soar with me to a good height and cast a look over Central Russia. Amid all the poor, sandy soil with its dense woods lies a small wedge of rich black loam. How it comes to be there is a riddle. And Suzdal is the centre, the capital, so to speak, of this patch of farmland surrounded by forest.

"Again, if you soar still higher, you can see that Suzdal is not in reality any distance from trade routes—and important ones, too. It is only today that they have changed, leaving Suzdal on one side. But in former times there was a great route from Novgorod to the Black Sea, another from Novgorod to the Caspian. Suzdal rose on the second.

"The Kamenka where we see the pretty yellow water-lilies was once deep enough for the merchants' vessels. Four versts away the Kamenka enters the Nerl, the Nerl in due course enters the Klyazma, the Klyazma enters the Oka, and the Oka finally joins the Volga which is the broad road to the magic Orient with its perfumes, carpets, spices, and other luxuries. Where the Volga-Don canal flows today, there was a portage to the Dnieper, and from there other far places beckoned from the mist—Byzantium, Venice, Arabia. That is why excavations in the black soil of Suzdal disclose Persian, Indian, and Arabic coins.

"Suzdal rose in heathen times. That rounded hill on which the church stands was a very important one in those days. The snow and ice melted there sooner than in other places, and the people gathered for games in honour of the goddess of love. On another hill, to the right, where the brick school stands, games were held in honour of another divinity—known variously as Bacchus or Dionysius, but to the Suzdal people of old as Oblupa. And of course the Oblupa games were accompanied by drinking and festivities of all kinds.

"Christianity came to Suzdal from Kiev, but it did not win the day easily. There were uprisings led by the heathen priests; it was in connection with one of these, in 1024, that Suzdal was first mentioned in the old chronicles.

"Vladimir Monomakh came to subdue the rebels, and to mark his victory he had the Nativity of the Virgin Cathedral built. The work was done by builders from Kiev, men from the south who failed to take the frost and damp of the northern climate into account; they dug shallow foundations and the cathedral collapsed. But it was built again. You shall see it today. Not long ago I dug down to a road laid by Vladimir Monomakh; now it lies at a depth of two metres ninety centimetres.

"Yuri Dolgoruky chose Suzdal as his capital but took up his residence in Kideksha, four versts away, where the Kamenka flows into the Nerl. And you may remember that Andrei Bogolyubsky, who called Vladimir his capital, also preferred to live in his Bogolyubov, at the junction of the Nerl and the Klyazma. It was safer.

"When Suzdal was a big, flourishing town, in the thick forests westward, smoke rose from the dozen-or-so chimneys of the village of Moscow.

"One of Alexander Nevsky's sons—the youngest, Daniil, inherited that lost, neglected Moscow, an insignificant possession of Vladimir and Suzdal. Daniil went there, and that was the beginning of Moscow's rise. It continued under Daniil's children and his children's children until there had been a complete somersault—Moscow became the capital, and Vladimir and Suzdal its possessions. . . ."

Again we were in the perfumed warmth of the Arch-Hierarch's palace courtyard, then came the sharp contrast of the cathedral's ancient, stony chill. The great doors, coal-black, copper-bound, gleamed with gold. This was the famous gold inlay, which lasts for ever. The doors escaped destruction during the Mongol invasion which was always reckoned as a divine miracle.

"Look down there," said Varganov with a jerk of his head, "that bottom corner. I passed this door day after day for twenty years, and then one day I thought, let's clean it and see what we find. So I cleaned up a corner and there was Samson tearing apart the lion's jaws. Pure Byzantium. The cathedral walls are covered with religious paintings. The upper layers are of no interest, but if you clean them off there are 16th-century frescoes, and underneath those, designs from the time of Monomakh.

"Frescoes are painted on damp plaster. They have to be finished within four hours, while the plaster is drying. Some painters started by tracing their designs with a nail," and Varganov pointed to circles drawn on the plaster. In one place several curves had been traced—evidently the artist had not been able to find the centre.

"How was that? Would he have been a beginner, or what?" someone asked.

"Drunk, more likely, that's why he spoiled the plaster. Rublev painted his frescoes without any nails. A real virtuoso."

"What's that tomb, over there in the corner?"

"That? That's Prince Kisly, Tsar Vasili's best-man at his wedding," Varganov answered casually.

He spoke of princes, princesses and their families as simply as though they were relatives of his friends, or his own friends. When we were on our way from the cathedral to the Pokrov Monastery there was a still more typical incident. A rather tipsy man in his thirties took Varganov aside and for about five minutes argued and urged something on him.

"Who was that?" we asked when Varganov overtook us.

"He's a descendant of a Novgorod merchant. Prince Yaroslav seized a lot of people from Novgorod just before the Battle of Lipetsk. Seven hundred years ago, it was—perhaps you've heard of it?"

"And what's this descendant now?"

"A lorry driver at the motor park. He keeps pestering me to buy some old utensils that belonged to his ancestors for the museum."

"What sort of utensils?"

"Copper things—drinking bowls, pitchers and trays."

We soon came to the Pokrov Monastery. Varganov took us straight to the crypt. Brick steps led us down and down, while Varganov told us, "Ivan Grozny liked to come here. The Pokrov Monastery stood high in his favour. When he went to Kazan he had a service held here first, and when he came back, he had another. He even made a vow that if he took Kazan he'd bestow on the monastery a royal gift."

Now we found ourselves among stone coffins.

"Ekaterina Shuiskaya, daughter of Malyuta Skuratov," said Varganov casually, pointing to one of them. "When Skopin entered Moscow after defeating the Poles, the Shuiskies decided to poison him—out of envy. It was this good lady who gave him poison at a feast."

"Princess Alexandra," he went on, stopping by the next coffin. "Ivan Grozny killed his son, and this is the widow. And there—that's Tsarina Anna, the fifth wife of Ivan himself. She was poisoned, poor thing. And this is where Ksenia, the daughter of Boris Godunov, was laid. She'd an unhappy life. At first the sun shone for her, but afterwards it all turned to storm. She was to marry the Danish prince, but the Pseudo-Dimitri captured her and forced her to live with him. Then Marina Mnishek intervened and had her exiled."

As Varganov spoke the oblong stones, dimly seen in the gloom of the crypt, took on a gloom of their own. This one was poisoned, that one poisoned another, a third had her husband killed, a fourth was exiled.

"And here we have what is perhaps the most interesting coffin," Varganov stopped before the last one by the entrance. The cathedral of this monastery was founded by the father of Ivan Grozny—Tsar Vasili. His tsarina was with him when it was built—the beautiful young Solomonina Saburova. Little did she think that in ten years her husband would exile her to that monastery. He sent her away because she was barren. The tsar needed an heir, and she couldn't give him one. . . . They say she was frantic when they wanted to cut her hair. She struggled and fought, tore away the scissors and wept. . . .

"Meanwhile Tsar Vasili married Elena Glinskaya who soon bore him a son, none other than the future Ivan Grozny. But what about Solomonina?"

"They made her a nun because of her barrenness, and what do you think happened? Suddenly she was found to be pregnant, and actually bore a son. That son was doomed to death from his birth. He would have been killed, of course, so that he should not claim the throne when he grew up and cause trouble in the kingdom. After all, he was the brother of Ivan Grozny. But it was said he died in infancy and was buried in this crypt. And that was the end of it."

"But a little while ago an idea struck me—let's see what actually is inside that grave. Well, I dug down and found a tiny coffin, and in the coffin—a doll, just an ordinary doll, wrapped in swaddling clothes as though it had been put

there yesterday. I sent it all to Moscow to be restored, they sent me back a silk shirt, the rest weren't worth bothering with.

"So the funeral was a fake. It was all arranged to save the boy. . . . So the boy lived."

"What happened to him afterwards?"

Varganov paused—perhaps to make it more impressive.

"Have you ever heard of the bandit Kudeyar? Yes. I haven't any definite proof, but general historical observation, experience, and intuition tell me that the bandit Kudeyar was this boy."

"What, the bandit Kudeyar, the one all those songs and legends are about?"

Perhaps, indeed, there was good reason for the fame Kudeyar won? Even the historian Kostomarov has written a book about him. And up to this very day if you go to Voronezh region you will be shown the remnants of Kudeyar's town, the fortified camp of the bandits. Perhaps it is true? One brother wore the crown of Russia, the other ranged the whole land. Lie there, little doll, in the coffin, while the true son, surrounded by faithful friends, by free men, gallops his fiery horse through the dark forests, and bears the name of Kudeyar. He feels no envy for the tsar, whose sick fancy sees treachery and sedition in every corner. And if he dies, it will be in the free air, under the stars, not under smoky candles and a stinking censer.

Here, in the Pokrov Monastery, Varganov showed us several examples of restoration. At that time work was in progress in the refectory. Varganov's aim was to restore the early forms under the later brickwork.

"Sometimes a single brick wedge has to serve us for restoring a whole window."

"But can that be done?"

"At first I thought it couldn't. But it's just the same thing as a zoologist reconstructing the whole skeleton of a pterodactyl from a single bone. The way we found the stairway into the Arch-Hierarch's chambers was interesting."

"How was that?"

"We counted the layers of whitewash on the wall. There were eleven. Everywhere there were eleven, except in one place, and there we found only two. So something must once have been there that prevented the whitewashing of the wall. When we traced the border between the eleven layers and the two, we got the outline of a staircase. And like that, step by step, we're restoring everything."

"Here's something else." Varganov raised his head and indicated three windows side by side in the brick wall of the monastery. "Don't you find those interesting?"

"The windows—of course—very interesting. . . ."

"Where are your eyes? Can't you see that each window has a different ornamental design?"

Then we saw it too—the carving differed in the three windows, breaking up to some extent the architectural unity.

"Ah—you see it? And why do you think that happened?"

"An architect who didn't know his job, I suppose."

Varganov laughed.

"It's not the architect, it's the Russian character. Three stone-cutters worked on the three windows. And each one wanted to make his window the best, better than his neighbour's, and this was the result."

"You read these stones like a book."

"Yes," answered Varganov without false modesty, "and we have whole stone folios here. And for that matter, the whole of Suzdal is folklore, but in architectural form. Suzdal is a song in stone. And it was this concept that helped to save it from destruction. It was decided to pull down the later churches, leaving only the oldest. What could you say against that? If a church was built in the 18th century, you'll have a job to prove it's of any historical value. And taken by itself it really may be worth nothing, but if it's pulled down, you break up the ensemble, leave a gaping hole in it. And that was how I persuaded them that Suzdal mustn't be taken church by church but as one unit. It's a song in stone, and you can't cut words here and there out of a song."

Varganov thought for a moment, his face warm, as though remembering something very pleasant. Then he gave a short laugh.

"A girl from the Architectural Institute came here for study—Liza Karavayeva, her name was. She took that idea—that Suzdal is one ensemble, one song, as the subject of her thesis. Decided to prove it scientifically."

"And did she?"

"The thesis was a hymn to the glory of Suzdal. But I wrote to her, 'Dear Liza, you seem to think the Suzdal muzhiks went up on to a hill, and stood there scratching their heads, wondering where they should build another church to make it more beautiful. Do you remember that wonderful ancient embroidery I showed you? It was as though someone had taken a handful of gems and dropped them casually on black velvet. Well, that is Suzdal.'"

THE THIRTY-FIRST AND THIRTY-SECOND DAYS

The Suzdal market was full of wild strawberries and raspberries, and we felt the pull of the open, we wanted to be out of the town in the woods, walking along the cool, winding paths. And by evening we plunged into the famous Dyukov Forest, from the Sergeikha side. But first I must tell you in a couple of words how we came to Sergeikha and what preceded our arrival there.

As I said, the Suzdal market was full of berries, and after a late and filling breakfast of pancakes and liver *goulasch* we decided to enjoy a dessert of them. We sat down near the market with our berries in paper bags and made a kind of berry cocktail, mixing them together.

We noticed that a lorry stopped by us, but we did not pay any attention that a man sitting in it looked very hard at us, especially at Seryoga. There was nothing surprising about it. Seryoga's beard was now so long it was begin-

ning to curl and as it was intensely black into the bargain, it could at any moment become the object of interested survey by idlers on foot or on wheels.

The man looked for some moments, then spoke hesitatingly, half questioningly.

"I know who you are, you're Kuprianov."

Seryoga nearly choked on the handful of berries he was just swallowing, and fell to coughing.

I shall not describe in detail how the one could not remember and the other kept saying, "Try, think back," and how it was all explained in the end.

When Seryoga was at art school he went sketching in the village of Omutskoye, not far from Suzdal, staying with one of the collective-farm members. The man who had recognized him now had been a neighbour.

"I remember, you were elected farm chairman," said Seryoga, finally remembering everything. "You haven't given up in disgust?"

"And why should I do that?"

"Well, the farm was a pretty poor one, I remember."

Our new acquaintance laughed.

"Get up here with me, I'll take you along and show you."

"No, thanks very much, but we're going to Mstera, and Omutskoye's the opposite way."

"Never mind that, I'll see you're all right. How far did you mean to go today?"

"Well, to judge by the map, we'll probably get to Sergeikha."

"You'll be there by evening. I'll take you myself. Get in."

We did so. All the way Seryoga and Alexander Fyodorovich Borisov, our new acquaintance, talked about that summer when the village had been swamped with Moscow art students, recalling this person and that—students and villagers.

The journey was not a long one, we very soon halted by the farm offices, a new building. The chairman slammed the door of the lorry, gave some instructions about it and began to show us round. And the further we went, the greater Seryoga's surprise.

"Where's all this come from? You hadn't any of it before."

"Yes," said Borisov. "Five years ago all the farm had was debts. Three hundred and fifty thousand, they came to. And the second year after I took over they rose to six hundred thousand. But they're all gone long ago, and our income last year came to over a million."

"How on earth did you manage it?"

It is a pity that Borisov had not the gift of vivid narrative. A pity, too, that he thought he must use newspaper language for anybody to do with the press. But still, the main fact was clear—a good, firm, efficient manager had taken over.

"Organization of land sectors," he held up one finger. "Agrotechnical measures," he held up another, "and proper work by the members, good work encouraged by personal incentive. Why did the debts rise in the first year? Because

in spite of our debts, we bought a tremendous amount of fertilizer. 'It'll pay for itself several times over,' I told the farmers. And it did. We fertilized twice and got a grand harvest. And in spite of our debts we bought a lot of straw too, and spread it under the cattle, bedded them down on it. They churned it up into dung, the dung became grain, and the grain gave us our money back a hundredfold. And in spite of our debts we bought two motor cisterns, to carry *bar-da*. *Bar-da*'s the waste from vodka distilleries, very nourishing for cattle. We fed it to our cows, they gave more milk and the milk gave us more money. When I took over, our cows gave us a thousand four hundred litres on the average. This year it's three thousand. More than double."

All this he told us as we went round, seeing the four-row cow-house of brick just going up—mechanized, with automatic watering, seeing the pipes that would bring water to it, the silo tower and the maize which had shot up to a height never before seen in the Vladimir region.

"Maybe sunflower or vetch would be better?" I asked, to draw Borisov out on the subject of maize.

"Vetch is all right for green feed, but you can't use it for silo, and silo's what we need."

"But you can use sunflower, it doesn't take so much looking after."

Borisov's answer was one we had never heard before on this much discussed subject, and it was one that showed the real, thinking farmer.

"That's a consideration, of course, but then you have to remember, everything has its taste, its flavour. Maize is nourishing and tasty too, while sunflower is just sticks. Of course maize takes looking after, but if a chairman knows his job he won't worry about that."

We walked through the village. Here and there we saw the lighter tints of new houses among the older ones.

"Are the farmers doing a lot of building?"

"Those are folks from town. Quite a few are settling here."

"From town? Well, that's something new. Up to now it's always been the other way round."

"Why shouldn't they come? They're better off. Take a lorry driver. How much'll he earn in town? Eight hundred roubles a month. But here that same driver makes seventy-five workday units a month, and each of them brings him fifteen roubles. That comes to over a thousand."

"A milkmaid makes as much as eleven hundred workday units, fifteen thousand roubles a year, and half a ton of milk, and a calf, over twenty thousand in all. And when we've finished our capital construction, that'll be in about a year, a workday will rate higher, twenty-five roubles. How can any town-dweller compare with my farmers then? There you are. Sixteen families have moved to Omutskoye from Suzdal. Our farm's like a field of wheat that got rain at the right time, the grain's filled and now it isn't afraid of any drought. It's not afraid of anything, nothing can happen now it's got its full strength, just like the wheat."

When we had seen everything, Borisov sent us off in his car and in a couple of hours we were in Sergeikha.

The sun was still high, it was early to stop, so we went through the village towards the serrated forest top that lay beyond.

Before we reached it, however, we had to cross several fields, one of peas. Childhood memories came vividly back. Sometimes, under the influence of a war film combined with fear of the watchman, we would crawl on our bellies from the edge of the woods until we came to the peas, then lie down and eat till we could hold no more, finishing by filling our shirts until we looked as though we were wearing life-belts. The best of all were not the hard filled pods but the thin slips. You ate pods and peas altogether, and those were the sweetest and juiciest of all.

The woods began. Following a winding path, we plunged into the great Dyukov Forest.

The well-trodden path led us to some pretty marshland formed by an overflowed stream. The bright green of rushes mingled with the cloudy white of flowering angelica, that filled the air with its characteristic river smell. Thickets of curly-headed willows round the edge of the marsh seemed to be holding back the pressure of the fir-trees beyond. A runway three planks in width with a handrail on one side crossed the marsh, narrowing to a thread before it plunged into the bushes on the far side. It must have been at least a hundred and fifty metres long. Half way over, there were delightfully pretty marshland scenes. Here and there pools gleamed like dark glass, with patches of yellow and white water lilies. Evidently the stream still flowed in slow trickles through the marsh.

When the plank walk ended, the path led up a bare mound, circled it half way up to the left, and brought us to the first house of a village.

After Sergeikha and especially after Omuts koye, this village was a depressing sight. The cottages were dark with age and leaned all ways as though about to collapse. Here and there the rafters thrust up like ribs through the flanks of a bony nag. The window glass was in small pieces stuck together with putty.

Somewhere a scythe was being sharpened; the lonely sound made the quietness drearier.

A number of women were sitting on a bench beside one of the cottages. We got into talk, and then asked why the village looked so neglected. Trees all round, but not a sign of new timber.

"Our Gusevo's short of menfolk," said a woman of about forty. "It's all war widows here. Nobody to cut the wood. When our children grow up we'll put them on their feet, send them to town to work and then we'll see about the cottages. They're our only hope, the children."

We had noticed during our wanderings that woodland villages were much poorer than the ones on open land. It was not surprising—the soil was worse. So it was not only two neighbouring districts that could not be judged by the same standard—even two neighbouring collective farms had to be taken each on its merits. Only that morning we had admired the tall grain round Suzdal,

and in the evening we were in glades where the wheat was low and the ears short. The growth was so scanty that when the wind blew the heads did not meet and rustle as good wheat should. And the soil was ash-grey pure sand under a thin layer of *podzol*.

The sun was setting beyond the hill and the cottages. Against its glow the houses and sheds of the next village, Polushina, stood out.

A stream emerged from the woods and ran through it, low bushes and shocks of hay wetted by a recent shower following its banks right down the broad village street.

We approached the team-leader's cottage, and through the half-open door of a shed I caught sight of a man lying asleep in his clothes and boots. But the woman who came to the door said her husband was not at home.

"All right, we'll wait."

The woman hesitated, fidgeted.

"Well—he's asleep."

"Drunk?"

"Drunk as a lord, good folks."

"But how's that? At haymaking time?"

"They'd a wedding at a neighbour's three days gone by, and he's been like that ever since."

"Oh well, let him sleep. Perhaps you could find us a place to stop overnight?"

"Of course, of course, good folks. That's easy done."

A woman was coming down the street carrying a bucket. The hem of her skirt was wet and her rubber boots shone. She had been berrying in the woods. The team-leader's wife stopped her.

Half an hour later, "Aunt Shura," as the woman was called, was giving us tea with wild berries.

From somewhere in the village came the sounds of an accordion and merry singing, one of those long strings of verses called *chastushki* that the singers themselves make up. We decided to go out and join in the fun; this was the first village merrymaking we had come across in all our hike.

While we drank tea, pale mist from the stream had drifted through the village. Mosquitoes whined fretfully.

A block of wood had been set up at the edge of a trodden patch of ground. This provided a seat for the accordion players. Two girls stood like guardian angels behind his shoulders, driving the mosquitoes from him with twigs. Young fellows and girls crowded round—thirty or forty in all, I should say. In the middle two girls were dancing the *yeletsky*.

Not long ago a well-known writer in some good essays on village life chose to poke fun at the *yeletsky*, calling it butter-churning. He said the girls dance with faces stonily expressionless and limply dangling arms. He drove the reader towards the conclusion that all this is the result of a low level of culture among the village youth and that they dance the *yeletsky* because they have nothing better to do.

In the first place, a good many girls dance it with great vivacity, with a drumming of heels. It all depends on the temperament and ability of the dancer. Another thing is, that if there were no *yeletsky*, there would be no *chastushki*. The girls make up these songs to sing them at village festivities. That is how folklore comes into being. And many of these *chastushki* are real poetry, as everybody knows.

As we arrived, a new pair of dancers came out. First came a girl in a light summer coat belted in tightly at the waist, bare-headed. She walked round the circle indifferently, without taking her hands from her pockets, and sang as though heedless of the people about her.

*Come out here, why mope apart?
Come out here beneath the moon,
Can't you hear the accordion
Playing such a merry tune?*

But the invitation brought no results. Nobody came into the circle. Then the girl made another round and sang again.

*Come out here dear lass to me,
Come and trip it with a swing,
Don't be stubborn and refuse,
It's your friend that's asking.*

This plea brought one of the girls out. She was rather taller than the first. Her hair was hidden under a kerchief and she wore a light frock. The gathering dusk left her face a matter of guesswork.

*I will dance and I will sing,
But heed well the word I speak,
There may be a lad I'll love,
But there is no lad I'll seek.*

This the two accented with such a kettle-drum stamping that there was a smell of dust in the darkness.

That was the beginning of a dialogue in song, and the characters of the singers were defined at once. The first sang gay, lively verses, while the second was gentler, more lyrical, more melancholy.

The first:

*Folks say I'm a lass of spirit,
I'm a Cossack so they say,
Can't say how I turned into a
Cossack on a summer day.*

The second:

*Once there was a porch I sat in,
Once there was a cosy nook.
Now the wind blows chill and dreary
Now I pass and will not look.*

The first:

*See that lad? Let's catch his eye and
Get him following us around.
Play him fond and play him haughty
Till his head goes round and round.*

The second:

*Once I'd break the ice and swim,
Strong I was and fiery,
Now if I but sing a song
Tired I am and weary.*

The first:

*There's a handsome black-eyed lad
Wants to court me, that is plain,
I have been in love but lately
Let me get my breath again.*

The second:

*Maybe it's the music's faulty,
Maybe I don't step it right,
Seems there's something, someone lacking
That I'm waiting for all night.*

They went on singing in this way for a long time. There were no end to the verses they sang. Of course, some *chastushki* are dull and colourless, but after all, that can be said of some verses by professional poets too.

Then came a discussion of who should thank the accordion player.

The first:

*Lass, dear lass, there's our musician
Who has played for us all night.
A handsome lad there's no denying
And to thank him's but polite.*

The second:

*Oh, dear lass, I tell you put
No tea upon the table,
Tell me not to thank the player
For I am not able.*

The first:

*Wine is standing on the table,
See you do not drink it,
I'll not thank him if you kill me,
Let him never think it.*

The second:

*In the well the water rises,
Fills the well and buckets too.
Will-ye, nill-ye, still, dear lassie,
Our thanks must be said by you.*

There are two ways in which the argument can end. Sometimes one of the girls thanks the musician, usually in a couplet containing a compliment, as for instance:

*Let us thank the merry player
For his music in the glade.
He's a handsome, dashing fellow
With an eye for a pretty maid.*

Alternatively, the two girls thank the player in a duet.

*Let us thank him both together,
Give him smiles a-plenty.
'Stead of just a single "thank-you,"
We will give him twenty.*

After the closing verse the two girls retire to the circle with a feeling of duty well done. Often they are applauded. That is how the *yeletsky* is danced.

That evening we listened to five couples—one consisting of young men. And long after we were in bed the sounds of the accordion and fresh girlish voices filled the night.

A cock flapped its wings and answered them.

THE THIRTY-THIRD DAY

Masses of ripe raspberries along the sides of the path slowed us down considerably. We would firmly resolve to take no more notice of the scarlet berries peeping out among the green, but somebody, unable to resist them, would pick one, and of course, follow it with a second and a third.

We came across black-currants too, but they were still green.

Beyond the bushes rose a dense forest of mixed trees. On the left we kept getting glimpses of mysterious-looking dark water. We kept our eyes open for a path which would lead us to it, so that we could find out what it was—a lake, a swamp, or a series of ponds. At last we came to one, and followed it.

Before we had taken two hundred paces, however, an angry burst of barking from a small dog fastened to a tree halted us. A cottage stood close by—or rather, a woodman's hut.

The forester met us at the door. He had evidently taken a drink or two.

Seryoga, with his professional memory for faces, insisted that he had seen the forester before—in Klyachkovo, lighting candles before Our Lady of Vladimir. Probably he was right.

The forester, who introduced himself as Vorontsov, made a great effort to appear grave and sober (after all, he had no idea who we were). He invited us in and wanted to offer us something to eat. But we declined, saying we had turned off the road to find out what the water was that we had seen through the trees.

Reassured about us—we were not trouble-bringing authorities—Vorontsov relaxed, smiled, and his eyes shone as eyes do when their owner's breakfast has consisted of something stronger than milk and bread.

"That water there, I'll tell you all about it. When it comes to the water round these parts, I'm what you might call an expert. My daughter'll be here in a minute, and I'll give you a practical demonstration. But that needs a boat, and my girl's taken the boat and gone for strawberries."

The water began fifty paces from the door, but was considerably lower down, as the hut stood on a rise. Soon there was the splash of oars, then a young woman soon to be a mother appeared on the path, carrying a basket full of rosy wild strawberries.

"Here we are, now we can set off."

The light narrow boat sank to the gunwales with the weight of four people. Vorontsov sat in the stern and paddled carefully right and left with a spade-like oar. And the lake opened up its beauty to us.

The dark-green oaks and limes growing thickly along the bank were reflected with mirror-like exactness in the still water. At their feet was a bright-green strip of grass. White water-lilies lay like fallen stars on the gleaming dark surface, their pure colour standing out in such sharp contrast that we could see them two or three hundred paces away.

"There are a lot of little lakes here," Vorontsov told us. "There's Rachino, and Peskra, and Vichugi, Overgrown, Pine, Dirty, and Big and Small Beavers. . . . And there's a stream stringing them all together, so you can get to any you want in a boat."

"Two Beaver Lakes—you must have had beavers in them sometime?"

"Aye, and they're there now. Not just in those two, in all of 'em. Only the name didn't come from the beavers as are there now, they were let loose in 'em only a bit ago."

"To breed?"

"Aye, that's right. But till a few years past this was a preserve for desmans, that's what our kind of beaver was called, I used to help look after 'em."

"What was your job, boatman?"

"Nay, they'd got some learned name for my job, Greek it was, dosmonologist or something like that. But they were good folks, the ones that worked here. The botanist, now—Sergei Alexandrovich Stulov, he was. Times he'd say—come, let's go hunting. But what we hunted was all sorts of grasses. We'd climb into the rubber boat and off over all the lakes. Why, you'd never believe it, but we went right to Sorokin Lake."

On the contrary, we were quite ready to believe him, especially as we had not the slightest idea where Sorokin Lake was.

"I got to know all sorts of learned names for things. Each bit of grass has a special name of its own, unlike ours, different. Take those yellow water-lilies, or the white ones. Well, lily—what's wrong with that? But no, they had to be nymphaea, or something of that sort—I can't rightly mind them all now."

"Nymphaea Alba."

"Yes, that's right," cried Vorontsov, and his face glowed as though he had recalled something wonderful. "Nymphaea Alba! But are you a botanist too?"

"No, I just happened to hear it."

"So that's it. . . . Well, I went about a lot with Stulov. I liked it all fine, because there was me doing something for science too. And then we had Natasha, the zoologist." And Vorontsov fell into thought, perhaps looking at Nymphaea Alba sliding quietly past the side of the boat.

"Well, and Natasha?"

"She'd come running to me with 'Uncle Misha, catch me a desman, I do need it so badly!' Well, I'd take a net, I knew all the holes, so I'd put the net over one, frighten it out and there you were. They were studying them, those desmans. They'd take one out into the woods and let it loose facing away from the water and watch to see where it would go. Well, where should a water beast go but back to the water? He'd be a fool else. So he'd just turn himself round and make for the lake. They were real set on those desmans. I'd a dog, he was grand at smelling out their holes. But then he died. He went out on the water-meadows with Natasha and came crawling back, half dead, staggering, he was, and spit dribbling from his mouth. A snake had started after Natasha, well, and that dog, he got after the snake. And that's how it was. Five hundred roubles, he cost."

"But you mean to say he could smell through the ground?"

"And foxes—don't they smell things through the ground? They get the smell, dig out the passage to the water and get their dinner. Every animal has its tricks. They used to ring them too, the desmans, I mean. Put a ring round the paw, and then they'd see that the ring made a sore place on the paw. Then they started putting rings on their tails. The lake's probably full of them to this day, those ringed specimens."

Vorontsov dug up this word from his memory with some difficulty but enormous enjoyment, that was plain.

"And the beavers? You said something about beavers."

"Aye, there were beavers, a new kind to these parts. They let them loose before the war. Two families, that was all. Well, there they were, gone, no sign of 'em, so we thought they'd not taken a fancy to their new quarters—died, that is. And then the war came and I was called up and forgot all about beavers. Though that's not right either, I didn't forget any of it, whenever I wasn't doing anything much, or when I was just dropping off to sleep I'd be back here, and I'd see the lakes and all of it just as they are. And it's funny, I always seemed to see it all quiet, early in the morning. No rain, no wind, just quiet."

"What were you in the army?"

"Why, a scout, what else? All my life I'd had to do with wild things, when I had to creep up softly and stop so still I hardly breathed. So a scout I was. Though it was a different kind of animal I was after now, a real wild beast, cunning and dangerous, not like our desmans. Aye. . . . Well, so I got wounded, real bad, too!"

"How did that happen?"

"Simple enough. We were attacking, running, see? Well, all of a sudden I couldn't feel my legs. So I thought I'd got it there, but I was still running. And I began to think—if it was my legs hit, how could I run? I stopped and went back for my gun, I'd dropped it somehow. I wanted to pick it up and I couldn't use my arm. So then I saw what it was, it was my arm and not my leg. And my glove was heavy, full of blood. But I went on fighting, that is, I stayed with the rest. Then the company commander said, 'What's the matter, Vorontsov? Why're you so pale?' I told him I'd stopped one. He wanted to send me back on a stretcher, but I said I could make it on my own feet. It was seven kilometres, not more. But I was out of luck, I got into a bit of firing and had to keep down a couple of hours in a shell-hole. But I made it in the end. And when I got there—what d'you think?—I blacked right out."

"And afterwards?"

"Seven months in hospital. And then discharged."

"Must have been a bad wound."

"Aye, they'd put three bullets in my shoulder, darn 'em."

I have to admit we looked with new eyes at this thin, unshaven man who had fought and then walked seven kilometres, waiting two hours in a shell-hole on the way, too, and all with three bullets in his shoulder.

"Well, when I was discharged, I came straight back here, to the old place. I was wondering all the time whether the beavers had settled or whether they'd died. I got into a boat and set off for Peskra. I came to an aspen grove but I didn't see anything. But then—stop! There was a tree cut through clean as though it was chiselled. Gnawed. So they were alive. I went on to Rylkovo, and found more. Eh, but I was pleased. And I think it was only then I really got it properly into my head I'd come through the war, and I was walking on fresh earth with the grass all round."

"You probably know where the beaver lodges are? I wish you'd show us one."

Vorontsov turned the boat towards the bank; we jumped out and found ourselves wading through thick virgin grass that rose to our waists. The field flowers were fading and the dominant colour apart from green was the red of sorrel. In some places the grass was so thick we had difficulty in making our way through it, and fast walking was out of the question. Here and there clumps of trees rose in the water-meadows.

Vorontsov stopped and examined the grass carefully. We too noticed that something seemed to have passed through in the early morning, brushing off the dew and leaving a narrow trail.

"That's them."

"Beavers?"

"Aye, that's the beaver trail."

We continued for a long time through the meadows, enjoying the sweetness of the green expanse. Then our feet began to sink and water seeped up into our tracks. In the middle of this swampy patch rose a wooded island.

"There's a lodge over there, but I doubt if we can get at it. You'd have to undress and push through mud up to your waist."

"Would we have to wade far?"

"Half an hour. Better come to another place I know."

In the second place too, however, the swamp barred our way.

"The beavers know where to build," laughed Vorontsov. "Not so easy to pay them a visit."

So we returned to the boat.

"And where are your friends now—the botanist Stulov and the zoologist Natasha?"

"I don't know. Our preserve was given up in 1951. So they all went away. And I was left here alone."

"And were you sorry?"

"What d'you think? They were real good folk."

"Why did it stop being a preserve?"

"Well, it takes money to keep it up. I heard say the authorities decided people had got sense and a responsible attitude now, they could look after their own riches themselves."

And do they?"

"Oh aye, they look after it," Vorontsov drawled and it was impossible to guess from his tone whether it was affirmation or irony.

When we came back to the hut, Vorontsov made us eat some excellent white buns and milk to set us on our way.

Our path led downhill, and soon we saw the silvery flashes of ripples leading to a band of steel-grey in the distance, with the dark up-ended reflections of trees at the sides. At last we had come to the main river of Vladimir region—the Klyazma.

The Oka, of course, is a bigger river, but it only touches the edge of the region, glides along it, forming a border with the Ryazan and Gorky regions. But the Klyazma flows right through Vladimir region, and almost all the streams and rivers of those parts join it. It is the trunk of a tree that can count over five hundred branches and twigs in Vladimir region alone. And that is why the Klyazma is the main river there. In fact people sometimes speak of Vladimir-on-the-Klyazma.

The ferry-raft was at the other side, and on our side people were waiting for it. First in the queue stood a small lorry, canvas-covered; then came two motorcycles, then another lorry. Pedestrians sat or stood along the bank.

A tug swung round by the far side and towed the raft over to us, and we boarded it. Wreathing and twining in little currents, lifting in small waves, the water slipped under the raft to emerge resiliently at the stern.

The trip was a short one. Soon the lorries and the two motorcycles drove off across the wet sand, and the passengers left the raft and went their various ways.

Three paths led away from the landing stage, and we hesitated some minutes which we should take. We could turn left, along a path which would soon lead

us to the ancient village of Starodub (Old Oak), now called the Klyazma Town, but we felt we had had enough of what was old. If we followed the right-hand path we would come to Kovrov, an industrial town where we would probably get stuck for ten days at least. The middle path led into the woods, but where it would end we did not know.

We took the middle path.

For some considerable time we went through the woods, sheltering from showers, but ineffectively, so that in the end we lighted a fire to dry ourselves. We passed villages—Stary Dvor (Old Yard), Zaikino (Hare's Nook) and Kuzemino, and finally came out to the edge of the woods to see a heavy black cloud bursting with rain advancing on us from the general direction of a village about two kilometres away across the fields. The first cloud was followed by others—smaller, but forming a procession promising a continuous downpour that made any idea of sheltering until it passed hopeless. There was only one thing to do—try and get to the village before it started. So we took off our shoes and ran at top speed across the sticky ground. The first drops met us half-way, but luckily the rain did not sweep down in a solid wall as might have been expected, it gathered strength with deliberate purpose. That gave us time to dive into a barn before it really started in earnest. From there we watched it beating down with such force that a watery mist rose not only from the ground, but from heavy drops colliding in the air, so that a fine grey film shimmering with glassy drops and streaks hung before the barn door, and a dull roar filled our ears.

The barn was empty, with a smell of flax hemp. Various odd things lay round about—a broken scythe, the cover of a sewing machine, the frame of a hand loom, a broken tub and several large stones, the kind used for weights on tubs of pickled cabbage. There was also a pile of fresh hay on which we settled ourselves gratefully.

The grey of rain imperceptibly merged into the grey of dusk, and lights began to show in the houses opposite. Soon it was quite dark. We were cold, we were hungry, but the rain showed no sign of stopping.

We set out to seek a place to stop for the night. In three or so cottages we were met with a definite refusal. The farm chairman was away, so was his assistant, they had gone to the water-meadows by the Klyazma, where haymaking had started some days before.

Luckily, we did manage to find a team-leader, who treated us like a man and a brother ("I'd take you in my own place, but you can see for yourselves there's not an inch of room, I've a big family") and conducted us to Granny Akulina.

After some gratefully hot tea we crept under the blankets. This was very different from the barn, the drumming of the rain had become a lullaby. Dozing off, we heard the old man, our host, come in.

"Who's that we've got here?" he asked.

"Just folks stopping overnight."

"Many of them?"

"Two men and a woman."

THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY

Granny Akulina talked differently from the women of Vladimir region, which led us to the correct conclusion that she and her old man had come from some other place. She did not have the deep vowel sounds of Vladimir, and her tone possessed a singing quality. She would begin on a low note, gradually rising through variations and modulations higher and higher until she reached a pitch that you would have thought accessible only to a real coloratura soprano.

Her lame old man was strikingly handsome. His small reddish beard imperfectly concealed a constant, knowing, kindly smile. I had always imagined the ancient Slavs of Pskov and Novgorod would look something like that, and it seemed my guess was a good one, for they had come here to Sannikovo from Pskov region. No wonder they know all about flax.

We said good-bye to Granny Akulina and sat waiting on the porch in the hope of getting a lift on a passing lorry. It was a slender hope, for all the Sannikovo lorries had set off in the morning to fetch bricks and had not yet returned, although the double journey should normally take only an hour and a half. They had evidently got stuck somewhere, and the drivers were spreading sticks, twigs, stones, and straw under the wheels.

Dinner time was approaching. Rose went to negotiate with Granny Akulina and returned with good news. "We'll get dinner—cold boiled potatoes with spring onions and butter, and for a second course curds with milk. As much as we want of it all. But cautious Granny had her little song, 'Harken, harken, and I'll tell ye. I'll give ye all ye want, and I'll give ye butter and milk too. But I'll reckon it all up to ye.'" We could imagine the top note on which that concluded.

In we went to dinner.

When we first went out on the porch in the morning, Seryoga had predicted that this was going to be an unlucky day. We'd sit and watch the rain hour after hour. We'd better start telling stories. . . . As time passed his gloomy predictions seemed to be justified, and our spirits dropped. But dinner worked wonders. We cheered up and somebody suggested going to gather mushrooms, so the day should not be altogether wasted.

"But look at the rain!"

"What about it? You just feel it at first, then you forget all about it."

When Granny Akulina heard the word "mushrooms," she began to take a lively interest. She even proposed to come with us, but at the last moment changed her mind.

"Now harken, harken and I'll tell ye. Go by the edge, keep on and on till ye come to some ponds, and then go left, right into the woods, that's where ye'll find mushrooms, all white ones. Do as I say and ye'll find my place."

However, we never got as far as Granny's place. Before we reached the woods we were pretty wet so we dived in under the trees, only to find that was worse. The leaves had gathered such a reserve of water that a single branch, a single bush could soak us from head to foot.

The stealthy rustle of raindrops filled the wood. But strange as it might seem, the grey dampness had not the feel of autumn. Here we saw bright summer flowers, there a late wild strawberry peeped out from the green, in another place a pale-yellow cluster of rowan berries pushed through its leaves. The heavy dark-green foliage was still full of sturdy strength; the air, in spite of the rain, held the warmth of summer, and not a single leaf floated on the surface of pools of rainwater, clean and warm to our bare feet.

To a serious gatherer of mushrooms, our conduct in the woods would have seemed unpardonably finicking, for we passed indifferently various of the lesser kinds, including russets and butter mushrooms, which are really very good. Even the birch and aspen mushrooms were not worthy of our notice. But those who remember the summer and autumn of 1956 will understand us; Central Russia had not known such an abundance of wood mushrooms of all kinds for many long years. So we sought the white ones only, and even of those we merely took the tops, our only regret—not the waste of the thick meaty stems, but the destruction of one of nature's chef d'oeuvres.

With wood mushrooms, it is the same as with many other things. When you look at a russet, you think that none could be more handsome than this one, with its dark rings on a burning russet background, and its crystal hollow in the middle. But then you find a young aspen mushroom thrusting its head through the thick silvery-grey layer of fallen leaves, and the russet pales before its slender white foot and red velvet hat. You look at these and you wonder—why is the white called the king of mushrooms? It is pale, colourless. Its only merit is its quality, its flavour.

But when you see it in the distance, you forget the others. It is as though trumpets and accordions were silenced to let the violin be heard. There is no other to compare with it. Yes, it is indeed the king of mushrooms. It is a little chef d'oeuvre of nature.

The heads of these chef d'oeuvres poured into the basket Granny Akulina had given us—cool, firm, a delicate velvety brown on one side, creamy white on the other. A subtle fragrance rose from them. They were all perfect heads, without a single worm-hole, a single slug-trail, a single sign of a squirrel's sharp teeth.

The eagerness which possessed us at first soon evaporated. There were so many of them that gathering was actually boring. Added to this, the basket became heavy as though filled with wet linen, for the heads lay closely packed.

Granny Akulina was not at all surprised at our spoils, and joined in our rejoicing at the beauty of the mushrooms. But for some reason she did not seem very delighted about letting us use hearth and trivet. It was probably a housewife's jealousy—what, a strange woman frying mushrooms on my hearth! We did not think at first to ask her to do it. And in such an atmosphere, a meal has no savour. A meal straight from the woods—whether it's mushrooms or fish or game—can be enjoyed only if those who partake of it are in harmony and good spirits.

Rose found a way out.

"Granny Akulina, I don't know at all how to fry mushrooms. What ought I to do, put the butter in the pan first, or the mushrooms?"

Granny Akulina laughed, she laughed long and heartily, stammering something through her chuckles and wiping her eyes with her apron.

"Harken, harken what I tell ye, let it alone, I'll do it and ye can watch me and learn from an old woman. You have to know how to do anything, and when it's mushrooms, those I've fried a-plenty."

Granny went out into the yard, and soon we heard blows of an axe. I ran out after her, took it from her and started splitting the wood. After that her heart was completely won, there was no turning back.

"White mushrooms, my dear, must be done with sour cream, and there was you, wanting to put butter in!" Again the apron was raised to one eye and then the other. "Think of that, now, butter! Yes, and ye must always mind to cut up two raw potatoes, cut them real small, and put in onions without stinting."

We all sat down together round the pan. The crisp mushrooms crunched, forks rattled, eyes sparkled. It was impossible to eat them all. By the time we had finished Granny Akulina had thawed to such an extent that she refused point-blank to take any money for the dinner or anything else.

"Now harken to what I tell ye, I don't want your money, not a bit of it, I don't!"

"Then we'll take your photographs, you and Grandad, and send you the pictures."

Out in the garden under the drizzling rain, Grandad and Granny stood motionless, with dull, stony, expressionless faces. But I said something about mushrooms in butter and took the picture as I did so. In this way I got a photograph of merry, human people—as these were.

We had just finished when a go-everywhere truck came slipping and sliding past the house. We made up our minds quickly, and soon it was carrying us out of Sannikovo along a road which had to be seen to be believed.

Darkness began to fall. The rain came down with short intervals. The trees rustled dully.

An old woman was trudging along the road, assisting herself with a staff taller than she was, just like a pilgrim of old times. Our united efforts helped her into the lorry.

"Are you going far? What takes you out in such weather?"

"It's bitter need that takes me," answered the new passenger in a brisk chatter very different from Granny Akulina's singsong. "I'm going to the Resurrection Church in Mstera."

"What are you going for—to pray to God?"

"Who else? And ye needn't start your grinning. Since we didn't have any rain all spring, our women pooled together, put down three roubles each and got after me. 'Go and pray for rain,' they said. So I went to Mstera and prayed, prayed real hard. . . ."

"Well?"

"Well, can't ye see for yourselves? It's been coming down a fortnight now. That's how it is, so ye needn't laugh at an old woman."

"But why are you going now?"

"The women collected five roubles each and came after me again, 'You prayed it down on us,' they said, 'now go and un-pray it, and don't come back till ye do.' So I'm going. . . . It's hard for an old woman, but I'm going."

To un-pray the rain, however, was beyond her powers; the heavens poured out water right up to autumn so that the fields were impassable for foot or wheel. Some harvesting machines were chopped out later when the ground had frozen. And after the first frosts the remnants of the harvest were gathered in. But all this was much later. Meanwhile, with not a few smiles at the pilgrim, we drove into the big village of Mstera, famous for its handicrafts, just as the lights were going on in the houses.

THE FORTIETH DAY

When you're travelling, it is no time to be thinking of everyday, home subjects.

Our time was up, and we had only done half of all that we had intended. At Vyazniki we came out again on the asphalt highway we had left forty days before. The original idea had been to cross it and dive into the district lying south of it. But time forbade. So all the southern half of the region—all Meshchera with its forests, its swamps, its incomparable Gus-Khrustalny, its ancient Murom and its Karacharov where the legendary *bogatyr* Ilya Muromets "sat unable to move his legs"—all this retreated from tangible reality back into the world of dreams.

The three days we still had left could not mend matters.

Summing up, we decided that we had shared all difficulties fairly, we had learned a great many interesting things and the next summer or the one after the three of us would certainly hike through Meshchera just as we had hiked through Opolye.

After all, it is a good thing when something is still left for the future. There is no placidity, no completion, no end to life. Beyond the horizon, other horizons open up, and beyond them others again.

Still, we did decide to see something of the Yaropolk Pine Forest before we left Vladimir region.

"A forest is a social organism in which the trees live in close mutual activity with one another, influencing the soil and the atmosphere"—this quotation from a book on forestry was given us in parting by a forestry expert in Vyazniki.

I would not venture to say we pronounced those words of wisdom as we plunged into the heart of the Yaropolk Pine Forest. Although we could have added to them, for apart from the soil and the atmosphere, it had its influence on us, making us walk very softly, enchanted, stunned, reverent and humble.

We walked, small moving objects, past the feet of coppery giants that lifted their green tops somewhere far, far over our heads. The tree trunks, like ourselves, were plunged in shadow, but the tops, unlike us, could gaze at the sun, the horizon, the whole spacious earth.

There was no undergrowth. The ground, a succession of small mounds and billows (perhaps in ancient times these had been sand-dunes), was covered with whitish film of lichen that made it look as though it were carved from silver. This lichen crunched drily under our feet on raised ground and gave way so that they sank a little into the soil on swampy stretches. White lichen and red pine trunks—that was the sparse simplicity of this forest.

When by our reckoning Lake Kshchara, the heart of the Yaropolk Pine Forest, could not be more than five or seven kilometres off, we suddenly noticed a sign we had never seen before carved on a pine. It was rather like a vertical arrow at least a metre and a half long, with feathers that spread over half the width of the trunk. Closer inspection showed that at the tip of the arrow a small metal pail containing a thick white substance like melted butter was fastened to the tree. The explanation flashed on me—sap.

The next pine was scored in the same way, and a third and fourth. In some, the lumps of resin floated in rain-water. Now we saw that all the trees had their arrows and pails—there were at least a hundred of them in sight.

After a little while we saw a girl in a loose unbelted frock and a kerchief pulled down over her eyes. She was going from tree to tree with a bucket, halting for half a minute at each. When we came closer we saw she was scraping the resin out of the small pails with a broad blunt-headed knife and putting it into her bucket. When her bucket became too heavy she went to a tiny dug-out, hardly visible even when one was close to it, and emptied the bucket into a tub.

We wanted to learn something of her work, but she was very tongue-tied—possibly shy of these strangers who had suddenly turned up in the forest, especially as Seryoga's beard was quite enough now to inspire mistrust and even apprehension. In fact, one woman who saw him on a river-bank without his shirt cried out, "Oh heavens, it's a goblin!"

The only reply the girl would give to our questions was to refer us to the section manager who lived quite near, by Lake Poryadovo. "Go that way and keep straight on," she pointed, "when the big trees stop and the grass starts you're near the lake, and you'll see some houses in front of you."

Sure enough, we soon saw buildings through the pines, and coming to a small shop, easily found out where the manager lived. His name was Pyotr Ivanovich Sirotin: he was quite young, of medium height, with a small moustache, wearing a plain striped shirt with rubber bands holding up the sleeves and serge trousers pushed down into top-boots. He invited us in, and his pretty young wife put a dish of pickled mushrooms and three glasses on the table.

Then Pyotr Ivanovich proceeded to tell us all about sap.

"When a pine-tree suffers any injury, it pours out sap which quickly thickens in the air, turning white, and sealing the wound. In human beings the fibrin in the blood does the same.

"Sap isn't resin, although a lot of people call it that, it's the vital sap of the tree. Resin is got from pine roots by sublimation. Well, the injured tree pours out sap which soon hardens. That means that to keep on getting sap we have to keep on making new wounds. That's the job of girls like the one you saw. She comes to a tree, scrapes off a bit of rough bark, and then slices a long narrow groove down the trunk. The sap soon starts flowing from it. She cuts two shorter grooves at an angle, fixes a metal pail underneath, and there you are.

"Three days later she comes back, and cuts a new groove below the old one. So the tree gets no peace all summer, every three days someone comes and cuts it. Every nine days the sap is collected.

Tapping begins ten to fifteen years before the time comes for the tree to be felled. When the tree has only two more years to go, chemical action is added to get more, acid is smeared on the fresh wound, and that brings a tremendous flow of sap, as though the tree were putting out all its strength. This chemical action increases the flow of sap five or six times over. And finally the drained tree is felled and taken away."

He also told us that a kilogram of sap costs five roubles, and a thousand kilograms of it produces one hundred and ninety kilograms of turpentine and seven hundred and forty kilograms of rosin, that our country produces a hundred and forty thousand tons of sap every year and we take third place in the world for it, coming after only France and America. France holds first place because of a special southern pine that is particularlyappy.

Then we went into the forest and Pyotr Ivanovich showed us how the grooves were cut and the small buckets fixed.

"The flow depends on the way the arrow is cut, not just on the tree," he explained. "A deep cut is only harmful. Besides, it makes the tree flinch."

"Flinch—how do you mean?"

"Well, it gets sort of lifeless, sick. It isn't depth that counts—no need to gouge into the wood, it's the good clean cut. You have to cut the resinous layer and open up the outlets."

We tried to make an incision ourselves, but our unaccustomed hands made a poor job of it.

"Pleasant work, it must be," somebody said. "Just walking in the forest from tree to tree. What more could anyone want?"

"Well, that's as may be. Of course, it's pleasant in the forest, but if you've a good batch of trees to open up, it's a bit more than a stroll. Our girls go out at three in the morning, before the heat comes. It's easier to work and the sap flows better, and doesn't harden so quickly, too."

Pyotr Ivanovich offered to guide us to Kshchara, and we set off straight through the forest, following no path, guided by indications known to him alone.

"What giants!" cried Seryoga, unable to restrain his admiration.

"They're giants all right," the manager agreed seriously. "When they get to ten years old, at least twenty thousand grow on a hectare, but when they reach their century, there's only a hundred left. The others have died, gone under in

nature's struggle for existence. Those you see are the ones that have won the battle for life, that means they're the strongest, the most enduring."

Lake Kshchara appeared suddenly, as though part of the forest has sunk through the earth and water had come in its place. Probably that was what happened long ago, because the lake is supposed to have been caused by a subsidence.

Kshchara is shaped rather like a flower, its petals formed by bays; it is these, with the addition of two islands, that make it so lovely.

Pyotr Ivanovich told us there were places where Kshchara was seventy-five metres deep, and it was only one of many subsidence lakes in the vicinity. Lake Clear looked at first glance more like a pond—fifty paces long, thirty wide; but the depth was twenty-five metres. It had an island—very small, but with bushes growing on it, and wild strawberries. This was a floating island, the local people kept it tied up by the bank and went sailing on it when they had a mind.

Kshchara, however, unlike Lake Clear, was a big lake; it seemed a wicked waste of, a lovely place that there was no holiday centre built on its shore. It was a pity, though, that in one place the pines had been ruthlessly felled right on the bank. Surely a strip could have been left by the water's edge. After all, there was no shortage of trees in that Yaropolk Forest.

A single house stood on the shore; one of the women working in the forest lived there with her son, a handsome flaxen-headed lad of eighteen with eyes that changed from grey to blue in differing lights, just like the lake itself.

He laughed condescendingly when we asked him to lend us fishing rods. He laughed, or at any rate smiled, at everything.

In a manure pile by the cowshed we gathered a tinful of excellent worms. "Where'd we better go? You probably know all the best spots for fish."

Volodya (I think that was his name) smiled once more.

"The lake's all yours and the fish too, they've never been frightened, never been touched. Throw a line in and pull 'em out."

In spite of this assurance, we walked a long way along the bank, seeking some quiet sheltered spot with lilies and other water plants growing near the bank.

It is absurd to hope for good fishing from the bank of a big lake. Why should the fish all congregate just where you want them when they have the whole lake to swim in? You need a boat. But nevertheless, we had constant bites, pulling out ruff, roach and even small perch. And once all of a sudden I hooked a flat faintly gilt bream, which strangely enough put up no resistance at all.

In general, I do not like fishing with a borrowed rod, it does not feel right in my hand. But nevertheless, a few hours by quiet water in the evening is a delight.

We slung our catch on a long branch and returned proudly to the hut. Surely Volodya's smile would now be less condescending. But only the bream caught his attention for a second or two. Then he silently climbed into a tiny boat that looked as though hewn from a single beam and shot out into the centre of the lake. We could see him doing something like arm exercises and guessed he was letting down a line and pulling it up again. After half an hour of this he

returned. The bottom of the boat was covered with fish. Then we realized what fishing in Lake Kshchara really meant.

We awakened as dawn was just breaking and went outside. Everything was grey—the misty forest, the lake, the sky. Only in one place the prevailing tone was broken by a rosy patch seen through the trees. It looked as though we were in for a windy, rainy day. After a quick bath, we drank a mug of milk each, hitched on our rucksacks and set off.

It would be hard to say which the forest had most of—trees or mushrooms. We stood still on the path and turned slowly round, counting as we did so fifteen or twenty excellent white ones. We even had a kind of competition—who could count the most of them without moving from the spot. We could have gathered several poods on our way to Vyazniki without going ten paces from the path.

But we were tired of mushrooms, we wanted berries, and of these there were still more. We would sit down on the soft ground and clear the space round us. Our hands soon turned black, so did our lips, teeth and faces in general. How many mushrooms, bilberries and whortleberries are wasted, so far as human beings are concerned, in this forest alone! Dozens of tons could be gathered. The women and children from the surrounding villages bring out great basket-fuls, but they are far from exhausting the supply.

As for us, we would have been reluctant to leave all this abundance had we not already eaten enough to last us a year.

By evening the forest became thinner and deciduous trees appeared, and soon we saw the Klyazma floodlands and the outlines of Vyazniki on the farther side.

We greeted it with a cheer. This was the conclusion of our wanderings, described—perhaps poorly, but at least conscientiously—in this book.

In the course of a tour, when the distance constantly beckons, it is naturally difficult to reach below the surface, however enticing such depths may be. One has to choose—either travel, go on farther to the next village, or stop where you are and study every detail of this one. My description of Suzdal and the adjacent parts, for instance, has taken up only a few pages, yet that town alone could fill a whole book. Another could be devoted to Omutskoye village and collective farm and its rapid growth. Or if one goes deeper still, any family in town or farm, any individual person could serve as subject for a story or a novel.

But even in this superficial glance cast over Vladimir region, in which the victoriously new growth and development mingle so fantastically with what is ancient, one cannot but be conscious of the thorough-going turn to something clear and radiant in the spirit of Russian people which makes them feel they are not only Russian, but *Soviet* Russian people.

Try to get one of these men now to go and work as a farm labourer—that is to say, if there were an employer to hire him, which is in itself an impossibility! Can you see this member of a collective farm, accustomed to freedom, to equality with others—can you see him agreeing to be a labourer? No, times have changed, and people too.

But why talk of being a labourer? Try to get him to leave his collective farm, give him a bit of land and let him till it himself. "But why should I?" he will say. "Why should I grub a bit of land alone like a beetle? That's not the way we do it these days." And if now and then he's angry about something not done right and abuses the chairman of the village Soviet or of the farm, or "higher-ups" away in town, that doesn't matter, what matters is his essential attitude.

I remember an episode in a film I saw once. It showed the early years after the Revolution; a bread queue was waiting in the rain. The workers cursed, they abused the "authorities" for the queues and because the shop was late opening. A man from the prosperous class who chanced to be there started joining in—"Yes, this is what the Bolsheviks have brought us to, nothing to eat." But then something quite unexpected happened. The whole queue turned on him. "Oh—so you don't like the Bolsheviks, do you? Soviet power doesn't suit you?" "But you yourselves—just now. . . ." "And what if we did? The authorities—that's us, it's our own we're talking about."

Another thing which made the end of our trip pleasant was the renewed villages we passed through, villages where all the people were eagerly, gaily putting up new farm buildings, buildings meant to last, villages where they could already see the concrete results of the steps the Communist Party had taken and looked ahead with sure, confident hope. The attention given to farming has brought a fresh stream of life to the villages of Moscow region, the Ukraine, Siberia and with them to those of my Vladimir region.

Yet at the same time, I was sad to leave my own parts which I had learned to love still more during our wanderings.

The ancient Slavs when they left home would dig up a root from the river-side of the plant called Odolen, and keep it throughout their wanderings. I rather think it was not so much for any powers it might possess as because it was a bit of their own land, the embodiment of home and their love for it. And what can be of greater help, what can give greater courage in difficulties than that love?

We face other roads, difficult roads of which the end is not yet in sight. And if it is not merely a plant but patriotism that gives strength, shall we not say with our forefathers as they thought of the difficulties ahead, "magic grass Odolen, overcome evil men, let them not bring down evil upon us, turn back their enchantments. Dear grass Odolen, help me to overcome high mountains and deep ravines, blue lakes, steep banks, dark forest, and tree stumps . . . I lay you on my heart, for my whole long journey. . . ."

*Translated by Eve Manning
Illustrated by Anatoli Erasco*



RUSSIAN FAIRY-TALES

ALYONUSHKA AND HER LITTLE BROTHER IVANUSHKA

Once upon a time there lived an old man and his wife. They had a little daughter named Alyonushka and a little boy named Ivanushka. The old couple died on the same day, leaving Alyonushka and Ivanushka all alone in the wide world.

So Alyonushka went to look for work and took her little brother along with her. As they were passing through a wide field the sun beat down on them from the heavens high, making them hot and dry.

Little Ivanushka got very thirsty and said:

"Sister Alyonushka, I want to drink."

"Wait a bit, little brother, until we reach a well," replied she. But the sun shone high in the sky, making them all hot and dry, they dragged their poor feet but no well did they meet.

They saw a cow's hoof mark in their path, full of water.

"Sister Alyonushka," said Ivanushka, "Let me drink from that." But Alyonushka said:

"I wouldn't if I were you.

"You'll turn into a calf if you do."

Little Ivanushka obeyed her, and they walked on.

They walked on and on, the sun still shining high in the sky; they dragged their poor feet but no well did they meet, and they were ever so hot and dry, almost ready to cry.

As they went on their way, they saw a horse's hoof mark in the roadway, full of water.

"Sister Alyonushka," said Ivanushka, "Do let me drink from that."
But Alyonushka replied:

"I wouldn't if I were you.

"You'll turn into a foal, if you do."

Ivanushka sighed and they went on further.

They trudged on and on, dragging their poor feet, but no well did they meet, the sun shining high in the sky, making them so hot and dry that they were ready to cry. They came to a goat's hoof mark, full of water.

Alyonushka said:

"Sister Alyonushka, I have no more strength to walk: I'll drink from this little hoof mark."

Alyonushka said:

"I wouldn't, if I were you.

"You'll turn into a kid, if you do."

But Ivanushka disobeyed his sister and quenched his thirst from the pool made by the goat's hoof.

Alyonushka called her little brother but there was only a little white kid running after her.

She burst into tears and sat down under a haystack, sobbing bitterly while the little kid only skipped and gambolled on the grass near by.

Just then, a handsome young merchant happened to be riding by on his horse. He reined-in his horse and said:

"Why are you weeping, fair maiden?"

Alyonushka told him about her misfortune.

The merchant said to her: "Be my bride. I shall dress you in raiments of gold and silver, and the little kid will live with us."

Alyonushka thought a while, and agreed to marry the merchant. They lived together very happily, and the little kid lived with them, too—he ate and drank out of the same dish as his sister. One day, while her husband was away, all of a sudden there appeared a wicked witch; she stood by Alyonushka's window and invited her in a coaxing voice to go bathing in the river.

When they came to the river the witch pounced on Alyonushka from behind, tied a heavy stone round her neck and pushed her into the river.

Then she turned herself into Alyonushka, put on her clothes and went into her house. Nobody recognized her as a witch. When the young merchant came home, even he was deceived.

Only the little kid knew what had happened. He started grieving, drooped his head, and refused to eat or drink. Every morning and evening he would run to the river bank and call in a bleating voice:

"Alyonushka, my sister dear,

"Swim up to me, oh, can't you hear. . . ."

Now the wicked witch found out about this and started begging the merchant to slaughter the little kid. But the merchant had got used to the little kid, and was sorry for it. The witch, however, kept on pestering him so much, and begging him to have the kid slaughtered that he couldn't refuse her.

So the wicked witch ordered huge fires to be lit with flames burning hot and steady, iron cauldron-pots made ready and bright steel knives made keen.

The little kid found out that he had not long to live and said to Alyonushka's husband:

"Please let me go to the river's brink, to drink my last drink and glance at the sun in the sky before I die."

"All right, then, go off," said he.

The little kid ran to the river, stood by the bank and pitifully bleated:

"Alyonushka, my sister dear,

"Swim up to me, oh, can't you hear?

"They've made a bonfire hot for me,

"Prepared a cauldron-pot for me,

"They're making sharp the bright steel knife,

"They mean to take away my life."

But sister Alyonushka replied from the bottom of the river:

"Ivanushka, my brother dear,

"The silken weeds have tied my hands,

"A heavy stone hangs round my neck,

"And on my breast lie yellow sands."

Meanwhile, the wicked witch kept on looking for the little kid, but couldn't find it. So she called one of the servants and said: "Go and find that kid and bring it to me."

The servant went to the river bank and saw the little kid running up and down, bleating pitifully:

"Alyonushka, my sister dear,

"Swim up to me, oh can't you hear?

"They've made a bonfire hot for me,

"Prepared a cauldron-pot for me,

"They're making sharp the bright steel knife,

"They mean to take away my life."

And he heard a voice replying from the river:

"Ivanushka, my brother dear

"The silken weeds have tied my hands,

"A heavy stone hangs round my neck,

"And on my breast lie yellow sands."

The servant ran home and told the merchant what he had heard. Alyonushka's husband called all his servants and they went to the river, where they cast fine silk nets into the river and dragged Alyonushka to the bank. They untied the heavy stone from her neck, washed her in water from a spring and arrayed her in her wedding dress. Alyonushka then came to life again, looking more beautiful than before.

And the little kid turned three somersaults from joy, and became Ivanushka once again.

They tied the wicked witch to a mare's tail and drove her off to a field.

Translated by Louis Zellikoff

THE FROG-TSAREVNA

Once upon a time there was a tsar who had three sons. When these sons grew up the tsar called them to him and said:

"My dear sons, I should like to see you married before I am very old. I would enjoy seeing your children, my grandchildren."

And his sons replied:

"So be it, Father! Give us your blessing! Whom do you wish us to wed?"

"Each of you, my sons, take one of these arrows. Go to the wide open fields and shoot your arrows off into the sky. And wherever they fall, go and seek your fortunes there!"

The tsar's sons knelt before their father, then each took an arrow and went forth to the wide open fields. There he drew the bow, and shot his arrow into the air.

The arrow of the eldest son fell in the courtyard of a *boyar*¹ and was picked up by the *boyar*'s daughter. The arrow of the second son fell in the spacious courtyard of a merchant and was picked up by the merchant's daughter.

But when Tsarevich Ivan, the youngest son, drew his bow, his arrow soared up and flew out of sight. He walked and walked until he came to a swamp. And there, right in the middle of the swamp, was a frog who had picked up the arrow.

Tsarevich Ivan said to the frog:

"Frog, Frog, give me back my arrow!"

But the frog answered:

"Take me as your bride!"

"My bride? How can I make a frog my bride?"

¹ *boyar*—member of the old nobility of Russia.

"Take me, Tsarevich Ivan, for such is your destiny."

Tsarevich Ivan was overcome with grief. But there was nothing he could do. He picked up the frog and took her home.

The tsar arranged the three weddings. The eldest son married the *boyar's* daughter, the second son married the merchant's daughter, and unhappy Tsarevich Ivan had to marry the frog.

One day the tsar called his sons to him and said:

"I should like to see which of your wives is the best needlewoman. Ask them each to make me a blouse by tomorrow morning."

The sons bowed to their father and left.

When Tsarevich Ivan came home he sat down, his head hung low in grief.

The frog, who was leaping over the floor, said to him:

"Why are you so troubled, Tsarevich Ivan? Why do you hang your head so low?"

"My father has bade you sew him a blouse by tomorrow morning."

On hearing that the frog replied:

"Grieve not, Tsarevich Ivan, but go to bed and see what the morrow will bring. The night will give you counsel!"

Tsarevich Ivan went to bed. The frog then leaped outside, threw off her frog's skin, and there, in her place, stood Vasilisa the Wise. She was so beautiful that words cannot describe her.

Vasilisa the Wise clapped her hands and called out:

"Nursies, Nannies! Come quickly to me with all your needles and thimbles, and by tomorrow morning sew me a blouse of the kind my own father wore!"

When Tsarevich Ivan awoke the next morning there was the frog hopping about the floor as usual and on the table was a blouse wrapped up in a cloth.

Tsarevich Ivan was overjoyed. He took the blouse and carried it to his father. He arrived just when the tsar was receiving the gifts from his other two sons.

When the eldest son unwrapped the blouse he had brought, the tsar took it and said:

"This blouse is fit to wear only in some dark, old hut."

When his second son unwrapped the blouse he had brought, the tsar took it and said:

"This blouse is fit to wear only in a barn."

But when Tsarevich Ivan unwrapped the blouse he had brought, which was beautifully embroidered in gold and silver, the tsar took one glance at it and said:

"Now that is what I call a blouse, fit to wear on high days and holidays!"

The older brothers went to their homes and on the way they said to one another:

"Seemingly we were wrong in laughing at Tsarevich Ivan's wife! She is not a frog at all, but a sorceress of some kind!"

Some time passed and the tsar again called his sons to him and said:

"Ask your wives to bake me some bread by tomorrow morning. I want to see which of them is best able to bake."

Tsarevich Ivan again came home with his head hung low.

The frog asked him:

"Why are you so troubled, Tsarevich Ivan?"

And he replied:

"You must bake the tsar some bread by tomorrow morning."

"Grieve not, Tsarevich Ivan, but go to bed and see what the morrow will bring. The night will give you counsel."

The other two wives had laughed at the frog at first, but now they sent one of their women to see how the frog would bake her bread.

However, the frog was wise and she guessed that they would do so.

She kneaded the dough, then made a hole in the top of the stove and threw all the dough right into the hole. The woman sent by the other two wives hurried back to them and told them all she had seen. And they did exactly the same thing.

But as soon as the woman was gone the frog leaped outside, turned into Vasilisa the Wise, clapped her hands and called out:

"Nursies, Nannies, come quickly to me, with all your pots and pans! By tomorrow morning you must bake me some soft, white bread of the kind I ate in my own father's house."

When Tsarevich Ivan awoke in the morning there on the table was the bread, ornamented with all sorts of beautiful designs at the sides and with cities and city-gates on the top.

Tsarevich Ivan was overjoyed. He took the bread, wrapped it in a cloth, and brought it to his father. He arrived just when the tsar was receiving the bread baked by the wives of the other two sons.

Their wives had done exactly as the old woman had told them she had seen the frog do: they had placed the dough right inside the stove and, of course, when they took it out it was just a lump of burnt dirt. The tsar received the bread offered by the eldest son, looked at it, and sent it to the servant's room. When he saw the bread his second son offered him he did the same.

But when Tsarevich Ivan handed him the bread his wife had baked, the tsar said:

"Now this is the kind of bread one eats only on high days and holidays!"

The tsar ordered his three sons to come to him the next day together with their wives to attend a feast.

Again Tsarevich Ivan came home very sad, with his head hung low. The frog leaped about the floor and said:

"Croak, croak! What troubles you, Tsarevich Ivan? Has your father said anything unkind to you?"

"Frog, Frog, how can I help grieving? My father has bade me come to a feast with you! How can I present you to other people?"

And the frog answered:

"Grieve not, Tsarevich Ivan, but go to the feast by yourself. I will follow. When you hear a rap that sounds like the roar of thunder, do not get frightened."

They will ask you what it is, and you will answer: 'That is my little frog coming in her little basket.'"

And so Tsarevich Ivan went alone. His older brothers were already there with their wives, who were all dressed up and who had tried to make themselves as beautiful as possible. They stood there near Tsarevich Ivan and said, mockingly:

"Why have you come without your wife? You could have carried her in a kerchief. Where on earth did you ever find such a beauty? You must have searched all the swamps for her!"

The tsar, his sons, their wives and all the guests sat down at the oaken tables which were covered with handsome cloths and beautifully set. They were about to begin their feast when suddenly there was a rap that sounded like the roar of thunder. The whole palace seemed to tremble. The guests were frightened and jumped up from their places, but Tsarevich Ivan said:

"Do not fear, dear guests. That is only my little frog who has come in her little basket."

A gilded chariot drawn by six white horses came rolling up to the palace steps and Vasilisa the Wise stepped out. She wore an azure-blue gown covered with stars and on her head a radiant moon. She was so beautiful that words cannot describe her. Vasilisa the Wise took Tsarevich Ivan by the arm and led him to the oaken tables which were so beautifully set.

The guests ate, drank and made merry. Vasilisa the Wise drank some wine from her goblet, then, raising her left arm, poured the remainder down her sleeve. She ate a bit of fowl and dropped the bones down her right sleeve.

The wives of the two older tsareviches saw this and did the same.

The guests ate and drank and then began to dance. Vasilisa the Wise took Tsarevich Ivan by the arm and they, too, joined the dancing. Vasilisa the Wise danced and danced, and turned and turned, and all gazed in fascination. And then she waved her left arm and a lake suddenly appeared, and she waved her right arm and white swans floated over the lake. The tsar and the guests sat there, enraptured.

When the wives of the older sons began to dance they, too, waved their left arms, but they merely sprayed their guests with wine, and when they waved their right arms bones flew out and one bone even struck the tsar right in the eye. The tsar became so angry that he ordered both wives out of the room.

Meanwhile Tsarevich Ivan quietly left the feast, ran home, found the frog skin there, and threw it into the stove, burning it up.

When Vasilisa the Wise returned home she could not find her frog skin. She sat down, terribly sad and grieved, and said to Tsarevich Ivan:

"Ah, Tsarevich Ivan, what have you done!? If you had only waited three more days I would have been yours for all time. But now I must say farewell. You may seek me at the end of the world, in the kingdom of Koshchei the Sorcerer Immortal."

And saying that, Vasilisa the Wise turned into a cuckoo and flew out of the window. Tsarevich Ivan wept and wept, then he bowed low in all four

directions and went forth whither his eyes guided him, to seek his wife, Vasilisa the Wise. He kept walking and walking. He wore out his shoes, wore out his caftan, and the rain drenched and spoiled his hat. Finally he met an old, old little man.

"How do you do, my fine young man! Whither are you going and what are you seeking?"

Tsarevich Ivan told him of his great misfortune. The old, old little man said to him:

"Ah, Tsarevich Ivan, why did you burn the frog's skin? You were not the one that put it on, and you were not the one to have destroyed it. Vasilisa the Wise is wiser and cleverer than her own father. That is why he became angry at her and bade her live as a frog for three years. What is to be done now? Here, take this ball and follow it boldly wherever it rolls!"

Tsarevich Ivan thanked the old, old little man and followed the ball. It kept rolling and rolling and he kept following it. At last he came to a clear open field and there he met a bear. Tsarevich Ivan drew his bow and aimed at the bear, intending to kill him, but the bear spoke to him in a human voice, saying:

"Please, Tsarevich Ivan, don't kill me! I will be of use to you some day!"

Tsarevich Ivan took pity on the bear and did not shoot him, but continued on his way.

Suddenly, flying overhead, he saw a drake. Again Tsarevich Ivan drew his bow, but the drake spoke to him in a human voice, saying:

"Please, Tsarevich Ivan, don't kill me! I will be of use to you some day!"

And Tsarevich Ivan took pity on the drake and did not shoot him, but continued on his way.

A squint-eyed hare ran across his path. Tsarevich Ivan once more aimed and wanted to shoot him, but the hare spoke to him in a human voice, saying:

"Please, Tsarevich Ivan, don't kill me! I will be of use to you some day!"

And, as before, Tsarevich Ivan took pity on the hare and went on his way. At last he came to the deep blue sea and there, on the shore, barely alive, lay a pike. And it spoke to Tsarevich Ivan, saying:

"Please, Tsarevich Ivan, have pity on me and throw me back into the deep, blue sea!"

Tsarevich Ivan threw the pike back into the sea and continued on his way, walking along the shore. He walked and he walked until the little ball brought him to a forest. There in the forest stood a little hut on crooked little legs and it kept turning and turning about itself.

"Little hut, little hut, stand as you should stand, with your front towards me and your back towards the forest!"

And the little hut turned around with its front towards Tsarevich Ivan and its back towards the forest. Tsarevich Ivan then went into the house and there, lying on a bench, was an old witch with a wooden leg, her teeth on a shelf and her nose grown to the ceiling.

"What has brought you to me, my fine young man?" the old witch asked Tsarevich Ivan. "Is it work you are seeking or from work you are fleeing?"

"Ah, you old grumbler, suppose you give me something to eat and to drink and make ready the bath-house, and then question me!"

The old witch did as he asked: she heated the bath-house, and she gave him to eat and to drink and put him to bed, and then Tsarevich Ivan told her that he was seeking his wife, Vasilisa the Wise.

"I know, I know," the old witch said to him. "Your wife is now in the hands of Koshchei the Sorcerer Immortal. It will be difficult to reach her, for it is no easy matter to cope with Koshchei: his death lies at the end of a needle, and that needle is in an egg, the egg is in a duck, the duck is in a hare, and that hare is sitting in a stone chest, that chest is in a tall oak, and Koshchei the Sorcerer Immortal guards that oak as if it were the apple of his eye."

Tsarevich Ivan spent the night at the old witch's and in the morning she told him where the tall oak grew. He walked and he walked until he came to the oak and there he saw a stone chest in it, but he could not reach it.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a bear came running up and he pulled up the oak, roots and all. The chest fell down and broke open. And out of the chest came a hare that ran off as fast as he could. But right after him there came another hare that ran and ran and overtook the first and tore him to bits. And then a duck came flying out of the hare and she flew high into the sky. Suddenly, out of the clear blue sky, a drake came rushing at the duck and struck it and the duck dropped an egg which fell right into the deep blue sea. . . .

When Tsarevich Ivan saw that, he broke into tears, for how could he get the egg that lay there in the sea? But all of a sudden a pike came swimming over to the shore, and there, between its teeth, it held the egg. Tsarevich Ivan broke the egg and took a needle out of it. Then he began to break off the end of the needle. As he tried to break it Koshchei the Sorcerer Immortal kept twisting and turning and fighting back but no matter how he twisted and turned and fought back Tsarevich Ivan succeeded in breaking off the end of the needle and Koshchei had to die.

Tsarevich Ivan went into Koshchei's white stone chambers. Vasilisa the Wise came running out to him and kissed him full on the lips. Tsarevich Ivan and Vasilisa the Wise returned home and lived happily ever after, to a ripe old age.

Translated by Pauline Rose



Poetry

Gafur GULYAM

YOUR SIGNATURE

*T*hose words like the lines of a heart-moving ode
Hold the innermost meaning of life.
Your writing, my comrade, illumines the road
For humanity weary with strife.
My countryman,
That is your signature.

The columns that prop the Reichstag in Berlin
Stand like poplars beridden with worms,
On the walls all around, both without and within
The triumphant word "Victory" burns.
My countryman,
That is your signature.

You returned to the battle-torn world its delight,
Peace to bleeding mankind you restored.
On the pages of History dazzling bright
Glow like sunshine your confident word.
My countryman,
That is your signature.

Aggression and menace, evasion and lies,
The tricks of which Wall Street is fond,
Are foreign to you; deceit you despise,
You have shown that your word is your bond.
My countryman,
That is your signature.

Wherever your gold-lettered writing glows
The sun shines abundant and free.
Your writing the pathway to happiness shows
A lodestar for all will it be.

My countryman,
That is your signature.

"Peace to the World!" sounds the call of mankind.
Can their faith into prison be flung?
On that mighty appeal stands the Soviet seal
Confirmed by us all—old and young.

My countryman,
That is your signature.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

WE SHALL NEVER FORGET

Those perilous times we shall never forget;
The cannon's deep roll
we shall never forget.

The comrades whose hearts the war steeled, who arose
At their Fatherland's call
we shall never forget.

Eyes yearning for vengeance with hatred most sacred,
Eyes burning like coal
we shall never forget.

On, forward to Victory! none of our comrades
Destined to fall
shall we ever forget?

Their glory is deathless, as life is eternal—
Their clarion call
we shall never forget.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

Alexander KARAGANOV

FREEDOM FOR THE ARTIST

WHEN Somerset Maugham was asked for his views on the responsibility of the writer to his day and age recently, the veteran novelist replied with his accustomed bluntness: "I don't think that either politics or philosophy are suitable material for the genuine story-teller. They clog the narrative and interfere with the action. And, after all, it is narrative and action which distinguish fiction from other forms of writing." (*The Observer*, November 10, 1957.)

It might have been thought that this old theory of the incompatibility of art and politics had long ago become an anachronism. But Somerset Maugham is by no means alone in championing it.

At the beginning of 1957 *The London Magazine* asked ten writers for their views on the relationship between literature and the vital social issues of the day. In reply, Stephen Spender declared that "I still feel that a writer is not made more contemporary by the fact that he is involved in contemporary social struggles. On the contrary, in the long run, these conflicts may appear to be exactly the things that distract him from the most significant reality of his time, and, of course, of other times." (*The London Magazine*, No. 5, 1957)

What phenomena are then more important, in Spender's opinion, than contemporary social struggles? He does not give any clear answer. But the reply emerges from his reference to the writer's "special conscience" and his remark that the writer "must deal only with the sort of reality that he knows most about"; it is obvious that for a person who has renounced the social struggle and its conflicts, the reality which is most familiar, "the most significant reality of his time," is either fragments of life or the experiences and feelings taken in subjective isolation from their surroundings.

John Lehmann also replied to the questionnaire circulated by *The London Magazine*. Like Spender, he thought that the writer must be concerned in his writing with the central problems of his time, but these problems should not be linked with political events. We would remind the reader that this same Lehmann, in summing up the "spiritual" results of the war against Hitlerism, boasted that during the war he and his fellow-thinkers had retained the right to be paradoxical, to be gloomy when enthusiasm was called for, to write of the roses climbing up on the garden wall and the kingfisher on the window-sill, the beauty of a loved

one, the fleeting dramas of childhood and much else bearing no relation to the war struggle.

John Lehmann was proud of the gulf between his emotions and those of his fellow-countrymen; he was proud that at the time of ruthless air-raids over London and Coventry he was writing about the kingfisher on the window-sill. He considered the greatest boon and badge of his freedom to be the fact that he had the right to forget what was then uppermost in the hearts of his people, their sufferings and their patriotism. Although he considered his literary stand to be a challenge to fascist conformism, there was in it something profoundly alien to those who were waging the historic world struggle with fascism in the blunt, crude language of arms. The revolt of the individualist against fascist conformism hurt fascism not at all. When a poet refused "on principle" to sing of the struggle or anything connected with it he, in fact, whether he wanted it or not, quit the field. And desertion remains desertion, regardless of whether it is committed in the name of freedom of the individual or because of common cowardice.

The question of the place of literature in society, and of the duty and vocation of the writer was always very acute.

When a writer writes that "the novelist doesn't have to save souls or put society right: he is primarily an entertainer," it is difficult to decide which predominates here—deliberate hypocrisy or self-deception; to decide this one must know not only the writings of the author but the man himself and his psychology. But whatever may be the subjective intentions of the writer of the words quoted (John Braine, *Books and Bookmen*, February, 1958), their objective meaning is clear and indisputable: though John Braine himself may not admit it, he is in fact doing that which he so painstakingly rejects—trying to save souls and put society and literature right. He is "saving" souls from the impact of life, from its truth, that is, he is pursuing a very clear-cut policy. A writer who falls under the influence of this policy very easily becomes an advocate of art devoid of any idea, indifferent to the vital needs of the people.

The adherents of individualism consider freedom for the artist to be aloofness from society, the expression of his personality, completely independent of the rest of the world. But such "freedom" is deceptive. The literary stand of this individualist is objectively a reflection of the property-owning ideology and property-owning morality of bourgeois society.

The bourgeois individualists declare themselves to be the champions of the artist's individuality, of his creative freedom. But in reality they are defending the right of the blind to be blind, for the individualist writer, while claiming to be independent of society and apparently acting in accordance with his own desires, in fact remains the slave of the social forces which he failed to comprehend. Even when the individualist artist is active in society, his activity inevitably acquires a voluntarist character: he utilizes art to construe arbitrary conceptions of life and to impose them on others.

The individualist point of view of the writer internally weakens and undermines the social and aesthetic force of his works even when he depicts contemporary bourgeois reality in a critical light.

About two years ago John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* made its much-talked-of appearance. In summer 1957, a London company brought it to Moscow. This play is in many respects characteristic of the present-day literature of bourgeois individualism.

Its central character is Jimmy Porter. Prickly, malicious, hysterically sharp in his judgements of life, of people, of himself—so he remains throughout all three acts. Whether he is discussing his wife, a newspaper review, the room in which he lives, or the plight of the workers, the keynote remains universal condemnation. Progress and reason is the "old firm" which has gone bankrupt; he discusses enthusiasm with a bitter irony—it's a long time since he saw anyone give way to it. "Negativism" has taken such a hold on Jimmy Porter's mind that there is no room for any other emotion. From malicious irony he easily passes to downright cynicism, and from cynicism to sombre despair.

With the development of the plot Jimmy has as it were to reappraise his attitude to his wife and her parents, to her friend Helena and to his friend Cliff. Some of these he likes, others he hates. But both his love and his hate are rendered anaemic, as it were, by his irony, his scepticism and his general dislike for people and life. With his monotonous and tormenting malice he is very often simply intolerable to all who have dealings with him, even to those with whom he is linked by bonds of love or friendship. This is the "angry young man" as the type is called in Britain.

From all accounts, there is much that is true in his character. It must also be said that within the framework of the given theme and conception, he is etched clearly, with many accurate and impressive details drawn straight from life.

But this is a case where the artist cannot be judged on the basis of his own conceptions and intentions—their restricted nature has weakened the play and its central character. The whole point is that the position of John Osborne the writer is such that he himself is akin to his hero.

Osborne is stronger in the portrayal of what he has observed than in its understanding and interpretation. The audience does not sense the life which has crushed Jimmy Porter and poisoned his soul. Porter's experiences and those of his companions move, as it were, of themselves, outside the "stream of life" which gave them birth and carries them along. The play depicts the plight of people with a complex destiny, but it does not explain it.

It cannot be said that John Osborne has simply confined the action of his play within a narrow family circle and the interests connected with it. A great deal is said about what is going on in the world today; there are references to present-day events and discussion about these events; some of the ideas which occupy the minds of Jimmy Porter's contemporaries are mentioned. But these references and these discussions do not reveal the essence of Jimmy's drama. They remain merely external factors, signs of the times which do not become a force impelling the thoughts and actions of the characters. The play lacks that depth, it lacks those ties with reality which endow even strictly private conflicts with great social and philosophical significance.

Of course, in saying that the play gives no interpretation of what is depicted, I do not mean moralizing and author's commentary; real art explains life in depicting it. Osborne's play lacks realist depth in character portrayal and in the portrayal of the circumstances in which these characters live. This gives a touch of morbidity to the emotions of the hero and the author.

The outlook of the "angry young men" is not the same as that of those who consistently and consciously defend reactionary ideas and art for art's sake. Their writings contain much that is true regarding present-day bourgeois life, and disillusionment and moods of young people caused by that life. But whatever may be the initial intentions of the "angry young men," their works objectively remain within the confines of the degenerate philosophy of universal negation.

Incomprehensible and unexplained evil gives rise to unrestricted malice; instead of hatred of evil giving rise to action, we have nervous hysteria, which is fatal for human purpose and will. The writer, held in its grip, is incapable of fighting for mankind. Good is impossible without the condemnation of evil, but good is also impossible when the writer everywhere sees only evil. The weakness of Osborne's position lies in that he, like his hero, knows only one attitude to life—scepticism; he lacks a realist understanding of the contradictions of life, of the struggle which is taking place between the forces of progress and reaction, he lacks an ideal, the urge of the affirmation of genuinely human values.

Universal negativism is a dangerous guide. A volume of articles by writers dealing with literature and life called *Declaration* was published in Britain last year. It includes the following statements:

"We have seen enough of humanism and scientific progress . . . they have engendered nothing but mass loneliness and frustration and periodic outbreaks of world war." (Colin Wilson.)

"The reasons for this exhaustion are all documented and detailed in the archives of the past fifty years—nationalism, communism, socialism, labourism, nazism, anarchism . . . the twopenny-half penny thinking that human happiness is an adequate goal." (Bill Hopkins.)

" . . . Humanist scientific culture which has dominated the European scene for the last three hundred years. . . affected every branch of thought with its poison." (Stuart Holroyd.)

Is it necessary to prove that from such thinking to Hitler-style book-burnings is just a short step? However much the Wilsons, the Hopkinses and the Holroyds try to pose as critics of bourgeois civilization, as the destroyers of its illusions, they are in fact attempting to overthrow all human values, all the ideas and conceptions, leaving mankind the scorched earth of universal disenchantment and mental desolation.

I do not say that the ideas of Osborne and his hero are the same as those which I have quoted. But Osborne's remarks to be found in the above-mentioned volume come quite close to those of Wilson, Hopkins, and Holroyd. In them we can sense not only the contradictory nature of his views, but even their morbid instability. He writes that he does not want to define his attitude to socialism, for he considers it to be only an experiment. He declares that the business of the writer is to

show the value of socialism by his own means. Then he straight away states that the writer should not discuss his ways of achieving these values.

In Jimmy Porter's outlook, the weakness of which Osborne does not reveal, and in the mental meanderings of the writer himself lies the danger of that desperate scepticism, beyond which opens up the scorched earth of universal denial.

A similar scepticism and universal denial also permeates the work of Marek Hlasko, the young Polish writer.

Hlasko recently gave an interview to the French newspaper *L'Express* (April 17, 1958). In the course of the interview he said that "A man without a homeland is nothing." But by his slanderous allegations regarding "totalitarianism" in Poland, his comments on Polish young people in the light of his own pessimism, his slanderous sneer that the greatest dream of the Polish worker is allegedly to get drunk, he showed what is his own attitude to his homeland and how monstrously distorted is the picture of life seen by the author of *The Cemetery*.

Hlasko's tales were so obviously at variance with the facts that in the next issue of *L'Express* there appeared a reply to the interview: "Marek Hlasko, Polish Editors' Prize laureate (State Prize) for 1958, shows us that he personally can live very well with the aid of his pen. His books have been widely circulated and benefited from considerable publicity. He regrets that the Poles are too numerous (30,000,000) to be able all of them to come and taste the marvels of the West. But then when a parliamentary regime existed in his country, his countrymen travelled much more. Not, alas, for tourism. . . . An average of 137,000 Poles a year had to emigrate to seek the bread which their own country could not provide."

At the basis of Hlasko's remarks lies the spiritual helplessness of a man blinded by individualism, all-pervading scepticism, and lack of faith. Hlasko himself admits that he does not know what constitutes the normal world. Of himself and those like him he says: "At root we are united by disillusionment; it is a feeling of hopelessness. But it is not enough to prompt us to act. And a generation which does not act is an object, not a subject." Hlasko goes on to discuss writers who earlier considered life in heroic categories, and adds, "for me all that is ridiculous and disgusting in the extreme. Above all, ridiculous!" This is the style of the entire interview.

The "angry young man" from Poland ridicules many things! Judging by the interview, there is nothing in life which he does not ridicule or bewail; there is not one bright spot, not a single source of strength!

In all such cases mistakes in the appraisal of life's phenomena and processes are made worse by the generally injurious nature of the individualist approach. Depriving the writer of the opportunity soberly and realistically to understand life and objectively to appraise his own position and place in it, and denying any active relationship between art and reality, individualism makes the artist a slave of illusions and false ideas. Such a writer, claiming to be free of society, very often proves, while not acknowledging it himself, to be simply the mouthpiece of the most false and poisonous ideas of social passivity and reaction.

Posing the question of the party approach in literature and the press half a century ago, Lenin wrote that we wanted to establish freedom for the artist "not simply from the police, but also from capital, from careerism, and what is more, free from bourgeois-anarchist individualism."

The slavery of literature in the police sense of the word is a simple matter and obvious to all. But the writer's slavish dependence upon bourgeois individualism is usually naively cloaked in "absolute freedom" and is therefore more difficult to detect. The former can be destroyed by a simple amendment of the laws governing the press and publishing. But in order to free literature from bourgeois-anarchist individualism, it is necessary to free the mind of the writer.

In many bourgeois countries there is a great deal of propaganda about the rights of writers which ostensibly make him absolutely free. But life is constantly giving us examples of the conscious or unconscious dependence of writers upon capital and hence upon reactionary ideology, examples of how the self-deception of the artist who is the thrall of individualist illusions becomes, through his literary creation, a means for the deception of the masses.

It is impossible to live in society and be independent of it. The degree of independence does not depend on the loudness with which the artist proclaims his freedom, but in the ultimate analysis on the social forces which he serves, and how he serves them—that is, on the real content of his life's work. The artist cannot be free when he connives at racial discrimination in the U.S.A. or, falling victim to militarist propaganda, supports the "brink of war" policy, atomic psychosis and the arms race. The artist who aids the political, physical, or moral enslavement of other people is himself a moral slave and defender of slavery. Only the artist who by conviction and feeling serves the cause of freedom, a free socialist society or the liberation forces of the people in a society as yet unfree is really free.

The answer to the problem of creative freedom presupposes the liberation of the writer from something more than economic dependence and legal restrictions. The writer is free when he clearly sees the laws governing life, when he understands the nature of the historical process, the forces which ensure the affirmation of real freedom and happiness for mankind, when, in response to the call of reason and the heart, he places his art at the service of progress and the struggle for the interests and happiness of the whole people.

It is in this way that Soviet writers understand freedom for the artist.

"In socialist society where the people are really free, where they are the true masters of their destinies and the creators of a new life," says Khrushchov in his article, *For Closer Alliance of Literature and Art With the Life of the People*, "the question of whether he is free or not in his creative work simply does not exist for any artist who faithfully serves his people. For such a creative worker the question of the approach to the facts of reality is clear. He does not have to adapt or coerce himself. The truthful presentation of life from the positions of Communist Party partisanship is his heart's necessity; he firmly adheres to these positions, upholds and defends them in his creative work."

The socialist solution of the problem of creative freedom evokes savage attacks from the propagandists of reactionary bourgeois ideology. Attacks on social-

ist literature come most often from those for whom freedom for the artist is not a state of being, but a platform. They utilize the slogan of freedom either as a club to attack socialist freedom or as a fig-leaf to hide their shameful servitude to hard cash.

But the real meaning of the artist's freedom is also often not understood by those writers who sincerely believe in the illusion of the independence of the individual in society. They do not understand that not all kinds of dependence kill freedom, and therefore reject any state or party influence upon literature. The lessons of history remain outside their ken. But only these lessons can reveal the real meaning of the slogan of creative freedom and the way in which it becomes reality, including the real part played by the state in relation to the artist's work.

When a state oppresses the people, revolt by the honest writer against that state is legitimate in that it is prompted by love for the people and dedicated to the cause of social freedom. Russian literature prior to 1917 was the most turbulent of all the literatures of the world—it was a passionate and stubborn opponent of the landlord and capitalist state. But the revolt of the writer becomes a crime against freedom and the people, when the state itself is serving the people in a socialist manner. Whatever in such cases may be the original intentions of the writer, it will objectively aid the forces of reaction, since it is directed against the bulwark of popular freedom—in the given case, the socialist state.

In the socialist countries the free association of the efforts of literature and the efforts of the state in the building of socialism and a socialist culture is a natural step for writers who are concerned about the destiny and happiness of their people.

The juxtaposition of freedom and service, of freedom and subordination remains completely formal until the real question is posed: Freedom from what? Service to what? Subordination to whom?

The socialist writer must be truthful in his art. The defence of man and humanity and the struggle against all kinds of fanaticism and misanthropy is for him a necessity. He must fight—for such is his social duty—to ensure that peace shall reign throughout the world, that people shall live better, that his own country shall grow rich, strong, and prosperous not at the expense of others, and that in it there shall be more human joy, beauty, and happiness. Such is the necessity, such is the real nature of his subordination and service to society. But does not the service to these ends constitute real freedom if they are acknowledged by the writer and have become his personal aims, the aims of his heart?

In literature a great deal is determined by the point of view of the writer, by the direction of his talent. The writer inevitably injects into his works not only the spirit, features, and influences of his time and society, but also his soul, his individual means of orientating himself in the world and influencing it. He is not a camera, automatically recording what is seen, but a living being with his own thoughts and feelings. The ideals of a socialist writer and his loyalty to the communist cause cannot exist as something external to his subjective intentions and aspirations. Ideas become the force guiding creative work only when



Evgeni Lanceret

Mariana (Cossacks)

they permeate the writer's whole being, when service to the socialist ideal comes for him to mean inner freedom and to be the natural requirement of his heart and mind.

All who study the history of Soviet literature with an open mind will readily see that the shaping of this idea-content constitutes the essence of its development. This is particularly clear in the case of the writers of the older generation who made their debut prior to the Revolution.

Recalling his youth as a writer, and his subsequent development, Alexei Tolstoy wrote in 1933:

"Real creative freedom, breadth of subject, a richness of theme which could not be embraced by a single life—these I came to know only now when I am mastering the Marxist understanding of history, when the great teaching tested in the October Revolution gives me purpose and method in reading the book of life. The veins of the law-governed process stretch through history, man becomes the master and the creator of the history of the present and the future."

This feeling is a source of great happiness for the writer. It is organic with those writers who live at one with the people. It is inaccessible to writers who are the prisoners of the individualist conception of the world, as well as to those writers of the socialist countries who adopt an individualist point of view. This type of writer interprets creative freedom in an extremely primitive and distorted fashion: whatever the writer writes in accordance with the free movement of his spirit is good. They forget that creative freedom in its "absolute" individualist forms gives great scope to petty-bourgeois anarchy and vulgarity, to ideological bankruptcy and, ultimately, to elementary lack of talent and taste. In arguing that "the reader should choose for himself," they in fact take the path of subjectively glossing over the real contradictions of the present day: they present the case as though all the readers in the countries which are building socialism had already reached a level of political and aesthetic maturity making it unnecessary for the socialist writer to consider this the task of educating the working masses.

In an interview published in the first issue of the magazine *Politika* for 1958 the Polish writer Julian Przybós explained in detail the need for creating conditions which would facilitate the realization of the creative concepts of cultural workers. He said that scope must be given for different conceptions and aspirations, so that every trend should take shape and show itself in its purest form. He also spoke of much else. But throughout his long interview he, like some of his colleagues, carefully evaded the issue of the ideological trend of creative work, and the fact that not every free "self-expression" becomes that creative freedom which is dear and necessary to the people, although this issue is today of special relevance in Polish literature.

In an article entitled "It Is Time to Give an Appraisal" (*Trybuna literacka* Nov. 10, 1957) Leon Kruczkowski wrote that even during the pre-October period (that is, October 1956) in Poland writers whose work was mainly in the form of articles, and to a great extent in publicist verse, often let the social ground slip from beneath their feet and sometimes were permeated, to a certain extent, with the moods, hopes, and aspirations of forces which were either inert or

actually hostile to socialism, of right-wing, reactionary forces. While boasting of their "boldness," they more and more yielded to the enemy and the philistines.

The concern felt by this prominent Polish writer is understandable. Some Polish authors who not so long before proclaimed their loyalty to the socialist cause proved unstable when the ideological struggle sharpened and the enemies' attacks grew stronger. They lacked the political maturity which would have enabled them to understand correctly the contemporary situation and the logic of social development. Sometimes they cloaked their surrender by talk about "boldness" and "freedom." But that did not prevent them from being the vehicles for philistinism. Today some of them are trying to elevate these sentiments to the level of aesthetic theories, to make them a symbol of faith in modern art.

Artur Sandauer recently put forward a "new" theory of humour. In an article entitled "The School of Unreality and Its Pupils" (*"Zycie literackie"*, Jan. 5, 1958) he writes that comedy shows a definite phenomenon from the non-official point of view, overthrows the hierarchy and tramples on the sacred. "Laughter is the weapon of the weak, with the aid of which he takes revenge and exposes the secret sins of the strong. The reverse situation—laughter directed against a defeated opponent—is unpleasant. So also is laughter directed against too obvious and already exposed sins. In a world where certain values are inviolable, there is no place for humour."

Sandauer's argument has without doubt its "between-the-lines" meaning. There is scarcely any need to detail what he means by the sacred, or against whom he wants to direct the "weapon of the weak"—laughter. By directing comedy against the bases of the socialist system, Sandauer at the same time—logically, from his point of view—wants to divert it away from that with which, in the words of Marx, man would happily part—outdated ways, rotten morality and the survivals of the past in the minds of men. Sandauer's argument is an integral theory of petty-bourgeois revisionist comedy.

An acute battle of ideas is taking place in the world today. Only a man blinded by the false ideas of bourgeois individualism can toy with the illusion of "absolute freedom." Life does not allow the writer to evade the choice. The question "Which side are you on, masters of culture?" confronts him again and again. And this choice—the choice of with whom to side, of what to fight for—is made even when the person making it does not notice it.

Real creative freedom can belong only to those who are heart and soul devoted to the people and who are convinced fighters for their freedom.

THE FATE OF THE UZBEK WOMAN

HERE is a huge textile mill in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. It is one of the largest industrial enterprises in the city. In fact, it can be compared to a small town for the area it occupies, the number of people engaged there, and the various institutions it has in order to satisfy the needs of its workers. Here one can see young girls who have come to work right after they finished school, and skilful masters who have had many years of experience. No doubt some of the older generation have been witnesses of the event described in the novel *Sisters*, by the Uzbek writer Askad Mukhtar.

The time when the events in the book take place is not so far in the past. Yet this novel may be called *historical* for the living conditions of the people, as described by the author, are so unlike those in modern Uzbekistan. Three decades have elapsed since the women of the book, weavers, decided to leave the privately owned shop of Kudratulla and to organize their own independent artel. During these years not only Tashkent, but the entire republic has become marvelously transformed. And one of the greatest of these marvels is the change in woman, from an oppressed being deprived of all rights, to a free, conscious builder of socialist society. It is about the first, the most difficult stages in her remarkable development that Askad Mukhtar tells us in his book.

Sisters is not the first book by this author, who has already won recognition as a poet. Mukhtar's poems were warmly welcomed by the Soviet reader, who appreciated his ability to reveal the romance of everyday life and the spiritual charm of ordinary Soviet people. Like many of his literary contemporaries, Mukhtar rejected superficial, rhetorical embellishment and artificial variations of the themes, mechanically transferred from the poetry of the past. He sought modern themes, modern characters, and fresh invigorating expressions.

In his prose works Askad Mukhtar also treats of modern themes. True, some of his works in this field are not always up to the level. For instance, the characters in his story, *Where the Rivers Flow Together* (1951), for the most part, are rather weak, sketchy. They lack the fulness of spiritual life, which is inherent in their living prototypes. Yet the reading public, having noted the defects in this work, properly evaluated the originality of the author's idea and the newness of his approach. And this friendly, impartial criticism was of real value to Mukhtar. Far from lessening his determination to work on modern themes, it helped him find more exact, correct means of solving his creative task, concrete evidence of which is his *Sisters*.

The *leit-motif* of Mukhtar's novel is one that has already been embodied in a number of outstanding Soviet works, as Furmanov's *Chapayev*, Serafimovich's

The Iron Flood, and Gladkov's *Cement*. It is the motif of the boundless forces of the people who were exploited and oppressed by capitalist society and who were freed by the Socialist Revolution. And Anakhon, a Uzbek woman, takes her place in the ranks of her sisters and brothers of many nationalities and professions.

Anakhon is the main character in Mukhtar's novel. But her story cannot be separated from the story of her friends at work, from those whom the author unites with one superb, heartfelt word—*sisters*. These include young, merry Khojia, sharp-tongued, elderly Kumri, silent, quiet Rizvon, an old woman who has been crushed by need and grief, and good-looking, carefree Nazokat. Inspired by Anakhon's example, all these weavers throw off the yoke of humiliating prejudices and customs.

There were cases when the younger people paved the way for their elders. For instance, Bashorat, a schoolgirl, Anakhon's oldest daughter, after a quarrel with the school-teacher Naimi, feels so indignant, that she tears her black veil off her tear-stained face. This gesture is of profound symbolic significance, for it means the final rupture with the old customs that made women hide their faces from the gaze of others. When she returns home Bashorat tells Anakhon what she has done. The girl is amazed when her mother, overwhelmed by the story, whispers: "I, too, thank you for this lesson. . . . You are right: we must argue with our faces bared. Both of us wore that veil together. And together we will discard it."

The social and everyday aspects of life are reflected in the novel more fully and tangibly than its moral and psychological sides. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that the realistic psychological novel appeared in Uzbek literature, as in other literatures of the Central-Asian peoples, relatively recently. Abdulla Kakhar and other Uzbek writers of the older generation were actually the founders of this style of writing here. But in Mukhtar's work one palpably feels his striving for psychological analysis and the attention focussed on man's inner life. If the reader compares the pictures of everyday life painted in *Sisters*, which sparkle with vivid, precise colours, with, let us say, the descriptions of the love of Ergash and Khojia, he will immediately show preference for the former, while noting the superficiality of the latter.

We cannot, however, fail to appreciate those scenes where Askad Mukhtar succeeds in penetrating deeper into the spiritual life of his characters. This applies, first of all, to Anakhon, who literally changes right before the reader's very eyes. It is from her husband, Sabir, a worker in a railway shop, that Anakhon first hears of revolutionaries, people seeking freedom and happiness for the poor folk. She, who so recently had pleaded with her husband to be careful and not to go counter to the strong and the rich, becomes acquainted with Yefim Danilovich, a St. Petersburg worker and revolutionary, and later with other comrades of Sabir's.

Especially impressive is the chapter which tells how the Party organization accepts Anakhon as a member of the Communist Party. She is accepted unanimously, the people congratulate and shake her hand solemnly. But when Yefim Danilovich, who presides at the meeting, says that they will now discuss

the next question on the agenda, Anakhon moves towards the door quietly, so as not to disturb anyone. She is not yet conscious of the fact that she, too, has the right to discuss most important political and economic questions together with other Communists.

Of course the chairman stops her and invites her to take part in the work of the meeting. Anakhon is ready to sink through the ground with shame. "Had she been accepted merely to be congratulated and then sent about her affairs?" she asks herself. "Aren't their affairs now her affairs? And she had run to the door . . . like an ignorant woman, gathering her skirts about her, and trying to slip away unnoticed!"

Nevertheless she feels uncomfortable, uncertain at that first meeting. How should she "take part in the work"? Maybe she ought to make a special speech of some kind? Unable to find the words for such a speech, Anakhon intends to sit quietly through to the end of the meeting.

However, things take another course. The Communists harshly criticize the head of the construction work, Ergash. An honest, fearless, energetic person, Ergash often spoke very harshly and lacked a tactful considerate approach to people. His comrades speak to him openly and frankly about this. And Anakhon, to her own surprise, also has a word to say about him. The people listen to her as she explains her thoughts, and she even argues with Ergash when he opposes what she says. She herself does not notice how she overcomes her embarrassment. The more irritable Ergash grows the more sure she feels of herself. She forgets she intended to make a special speech. Now the simple and ordinary matters seem vitally important to her. And she well knows what she wants.

The intricate processes taking place in the soul of Anakhon are described by the writer simply and convincingly.

Sisters is free of those defects which are characteristic of certain books that tell of production and the people who work in industry, such defects as the artificial division of human thoughts, feelings and deeds into various "sectors," personal, social, those connected with everyday life, etc. Such a mechanical demarcation does not exist in actual reality or in genuine works of art. Those characters in Mukhtar's novel whom the writer succeeded in describing best, reveal their personal qualities naturally and fully at home, during work, and in the political struggle.

Mukhtar's book is dramatic and tense in its action, which is understandable, for in the past the class struggle in Central Asia abounded in stormy events. The enemy did not restrict himself to the knife, bullet and stone in his fight against the finest sons and daughters of the Uzbek people. The preaching of the *ishans*, the whisperings of the village quacks, and open provocation came into play. For instance, Naimi, a counter-revolutionary, in the garb of teacher and activist, makes a "leftist" speech in which he seemingly attacks the defenders of old customs but actually strives to instil in his listeners a distorted conception of the policy of the Communist Party. He tries to attack the tenderest and most precious feelings of the women—their love for their family, husbands, children. "I repeat," Naimi says, "there are women who stick to

their pots, the way soot does. . . . But times have changed. What if you won't have your so-called family hearth? You will have your glorious Soviet artel and barracks! Glory and honour to our foremost women!"

Askad Mukhtar does not hide the difficulties and contradictions of the struggle. Naimi is an enemy whose machinations are not so very difficult to expose. But as for Ergash, the situation is different. He is a hot-headed, enthusiastic young man who, while subjectively honest, at times makes mistakes which play into the hands of the enemy. When selecting a site for the construction of the textile mill he insists upon the destruction of the tomb of Khazor-sheikh, and is ready to "cut the throat" of those who, having sunk into the mire of superstition, may venture to oppose him. But Yefim Danilovich is of a different opinion. He says that one must not offend the feelings of religious believers, and that it would be better to remove an entire mountain in order to clear a site for the construction work, than to touch tombs that are sacred to the local people.

This argument, in which Yefim Danilovich wins out, is most significant. It shows that the radical reconstruction of the working conditions and life in the Central-Asian republics, which has taken place in the years of Soviet power, is founded on an understanding, careful approach to the customs and habits whose roots extend back into the ages. Needless to say, in socialist society it is the *finest, genuinely folk* traditions and customs that are developed. At the same time, however, the Party has always been very considerate in its attitude towards the various groups of the population, their diverse interests and needs. In his novel Mukhtar shows that this policy has been very effective.

" . . . When July 10, the day set for the beginning of the construction of the mill, arrives, the site is filled with thousands of men and women, workers and Red Army men. Engineer Dobrokhotoy looks with rapture and amazement at that crowd of people wishing to take part in the building.

"It is a popular *khashar*," Ergash explains to him. "An ancient custom with a new aim." This ancient folk tradition has acquired new content and meaning. The people who have assembled to work together, are inspired by the same feeling that has inspired Anakhon and her friends. They have been given the opportunity to build their future, and that has filled the working people with enthusiasm, has multiplied their forces and abilities.

Askad Mukhtar effectively reveals the significance of those daily, seemingly commonplace deeds and worries of his characters. His book is replete with lofty poetry, the poetry of the people's happiness which is achieved in work and struggle.

LEO TOLSTOY

SPEECH WRITTEN FOR THE STOCKHOLM PEACE CONGRESS

Dear Brothers,
We have gathered here to fight against war, against that for the pursuit of which all the nations of the world, millions upon millions of men and women, place at the unrestricted disposal of several dozen men, sometimes of one man, not only thousands of millions of roubles, talers, francs, or yens, comprising a large part of the savings they have accumulated by their labour, but themselves as well, their own lives. And here we are, a handful or so of private persons who have come from different parts of the globe and who have no special advantages or, what is most important, power over anyone, determined to fight. And since we are determined to fight we naturally hope to win that fight against the enormous power of not one, but of all governments, governments who have at their disposal money in thousands of millions and troops millions of men strong, and who are very well aware that the privileged position they, that is the men who comprise governments, enjoy rests on war alone, on armies, which have purpose and significance only when there is war, the very war against which we wish to fight and which we wish to destroy.

With the opposing forces so unequal such a fight must appear to be madness. But on considering the significance of the weapons at the disposal of those against whom we wish to fight and of the weapons at our disposal we shall see that it is not our decision to fight that is surprising but the fact that the thing we wish to fight continues to exist. They have money in thousands of millions and obedient troops. We have only one weapon, but that one is the most powerful in the world—the truth.

And therefore, though our forces may seem insignificant compared with those of our adversaries, our victory is as certain as is the victory of the light of the rising sun over the darkness of the night.

Our victory is certain, but on one condition, on the condition that in speaking the truth we speak the whole truth, without compromises, concessions or mitigation.

That truth is so simple, so clear, so obvious, so obligatory not only to every Christian but also to every thinking person that it need only be set forth fully and people will find it impossible to act contrary to it.

The truth with all its implications was set forth thousands of years before our day in the Commandments we recognize as divine and says: Though shalt not kill. That is the truth—that man may not and must not, under any circumstances or on any pretext, kill a fellow being.

This truth is so obvious, so universally recognized, so compelling that it need only be set before people clearly and distinctly and the evil called war will become absolutely impossible.

And that is why I think that if we who have gathered here at this congress for peace do not speak this truth clearly and definitely but instead propose to the different governments various measures for lessening the evil or frequency of war, we will resemble people who though they possess the keys to the door, try to break in through the wall knowing full well that they have not the strength to break the wall down. We have before us millions of armed men who are receiving increasing quantities of arms and are being trained for increasingly effective murder. We know that these millions have no desire to kill their fellow men, that the majority of them do not even know the pretext on which they are being forced to do this thing they loath and are oppressed by the coercion and subjection of their position. We know that the murders these men commit from time to time are committed on orders of governments. We know that governments are dependent on armies for their existence. And we, who desire the destruction of war, find no better way to work towards that destruction than to propose—to whom?—to governments dependent for their existence on armies, and therefore on war, measures to destroy war, that is, we propose to those governments self-destruction.

Governments will listen to such speeches gladly, secure in the knowledge that this sort of talk will not only neither destroy war nor undermine their own power, but will even further conceal from people what must be concealed so that armies and wars and they themselves who command those armies may exist.

"But that is anarchism: people have never lived without governments and states. And therefore governments and states and the military force that guards them are necessary conditions for the life of nations," I will be told.

Let us assume, without going into whether or not it is possible for Christian nations, or for any other nations, to live without armies and wars to protect governments and states, that for their own good people must necessarily submit slavishly to institutions called governments, composed of men whom they do not know, that it is necessary to surrender to these institutions the products of their labour, obey all their orders, including the order to murder their neighbours. Let us assume all this. But then there still remains a dilemma that is insoluble in our world—the impossibility of reconciling the Christian faith, professed with particular zeal by the very people who comprise governments with the armies, also composed of Christians, being trained for murder. No matter how you distort the Christian doctrine or how far you ignore its chief



Leo Tolstoy. (Yasnaya Polyana, 1906)

tenets, the fundamental meaning of that doctrine remains love of God and of your neighbour, God meaning the supreme expression of virtue, and neighbour meaning all people without exception. Either Christianity and love of God and your neighbour, or the state with armies and wars—the recognition of one excludes the other, one would think.

Perhaps Christianity has become obsolete. Perhaps, when faced with the choice—Christianity and love, or the state and murder—our contemporaries will decide that the existence of the state and of murder is so much more important than Christianity that it is necessary to forget Christianity and to adhere to the more important thing, that is, to the state and murder.

That may be. In any case some people may think and feel this way. But then let them say so. Let them say that in our day people should stop believing what the accumulated wisdom of all mankind says, what the religion they profess says, that they must stop believing what has been inscribed in indelible characters in the heart of every man, and that they must believe only what they are ordered to believe, including murder, by various people who have by accident or by heredity become emperors or kings, or who have through intrigue or elections become presidents or members of parliament. Let them say so.

They cannot say so, however. And not only can they not say this. They cannot say the other either. If they say that Christianity forbids murder, there won't be armies and there won't be governments. If they say we rulers consider murder rightful and deny Christianity, no one will want to obey them, for no one will want to obey a government that bases its power on murder. Besides, if murder is permissible in war all the more reason why it should be permissible to the people seeking to win their rights through revolution. And that is why governments, unable to say one or the other, strive to conceal the dilemma from their citizens.

Therefore, if we really wish to counteract the evil of war, the only thing we need do is to present the dilemma distinctly and clearly both to the men who comprise the governments and to the masses who comprise the armies. And we must not only state clearly and openly that man must not kill but also explain that no considerations whatever can make this truth any less binding on people of the Christian world.

Therefore I would propose that our meeting draw up and issue an appeal to people of all nations, particularly of Christian nations, stating clearly and distinctly what everyone knows but no one, or practically no one, says, namely, that contrary to the prevailing belief war is not a virtuous or praiseworthy matter but, like all murder, is repulsive and criminal, alike for those who choose a military career of their own free will and for those who choose it out of fear of punishment or with selfish ends in view.

With regard to persons who choose the military profession of their own free will we should say in our appeal, clearly and distinctly, that despite all the pomp and glitter and universal approval with which that profession is surrounded it is a criminal and shameful one, and the higher the military rank, the more criminal and shameful it is. With regard to the common people

who are recruited for military service by threats of punishment or by corruption, we should also point out clearly and distinctly their flagrant error against their religion, against morality, and against common sense in agreeing to join the army. They err against their religion because by joining the ranks of killers they violate the divine law in which they believe; they err against morality because, due to fear of punishment by the authorities or selfish motives, they agree to do what they know in their hearts is evil; they err against common sense because by joining the army they expose themselves to even greater calamities in case of war than those that threaten them for refusing to join the army; their error against common sense is all the more obvious because they join the very group of people who deprive them of freedom and make them become soldiers.

With regard to both groups I think we should clearly convey in our appeal the idea that to truly enlightened people, free from the superstitions connected with military grandeur (and the number of such people is increasing every day) the military profession and military rank, despite all the efforts to conceal their true meaning, are as shameful, in fact much more shameful, than the profession and title of executioner, inasmuch as the executioner undertakes to kill only such people as have been recognized as harmful, as criminals, while the military man pledges to kill everyone he is ordered to kill, even if it happens to be someone close to him or the best of men.

Mankind in general, and our Christian mankind in particular, has arrived at so sharp a contradiction between its own moral standards and the existing social system that a change is inevitable, and the change must come not in what cannot change, namely, the moral standards of society, but in what can change, namely, the social system. This change, necessitated by the inner contradiction most sharply manifested in the preparations for murder, is approaching from various directions and is becoming increasingly imperative with every year, with every day. The tension that demands this change has reached such a point that only a little effort, perhaps one word, may be all that is needed, to effect the transition from the cruel and senseless life of the people of our day, with their dissension, arms and troops, to a sensible life, in keeping with the intellectual demands of contemporary mankind, just as the small impact of an electric current is all that is needed to effect the transition of a liquid into a solid. Any such effort, any such word, may prove to be the impulse in over-cooled liquid that instantly transforms the entire liquid into a solid. Why shouldn't this meeting of ours be that effort? Remember Andersen's fairy-tale when the emperor passed in solemn procession through the city streets and all the people admired his beautiful new clothes and one word of a child, who said what everybody knew but no one said, altered everything. "He has nothing on," the child said, and the illusion was dispelled and the emperor was ashamed, and all the people who had been telling themselves that they saw beautiful new clothes on the emperor saw that he was naked. That is what we must do. We must say what everyone knows but no one ventures to say: no matter by what name people call murder, murder is always murder—

a criminal and shameful affair. This need only be said clearly, distinctly and loudly, as we can say it here, and people will stop seeing what they thought they saw and will see what they really see. They will stop seeing: service to the fatherland, heroism of war, martial glory, patriotism; they will see naked, criminal murder. And when people see this the same thing will happen as happened in the fairy-tale—those engaged in this criminal pursuit will become ashamed, and those who had convinced themselves that they did not see the criminal nature of murder will see it and will stop being murderers.

But without armies how will nations defend themselves against enemies, how will internal order be maintained, how will nations live?

How people who have renounced murder will arrange their lives we do not and cannot know. One thing is certain, however, that for people endowed with intelligence and conscience it is more natural to live in keeping with these endowments than in slavish submission to people who order murder, and that therefore the form of social order under which people whose actions are guided not by violence based on the threat of murder, but by intelligence and conscience will live will surely be no worse than the one under which they live now.

That is all I wished to say. I shall be very sorry if what I have said offends or hurts anyone, or evokes hostile feelings. But it would be criminal and shameful for me, an eighty-year-old man expecting death any minute, not to state the whole truth as I understand it, the truth which, I firmly believe, alone can save mankind from the innumerable calamities it experiences as the result of war.

August 4, 1909

Leo Tolstoy, *Complete Works*,
Vol. 38 (Russian Edition).

C O M M E N T A R Y

In July 1909 Leo Tolstoy was invited to attend a peace congress in Stockholm, scheduled to take place the following month. Though he was eighty at the time, the great writer decided to travel to the Swedish capital and deliver a speech there on the war danger and measures to combat it.

Tolstoy was a passionate enemy of imperialism, and in many of his works, particularly in the treatises and articles he wrote in the latter 19th and early 20th century, he severely indicted the instigators of wars and wrathfully attacked philosophers, scientists and writers who, like Nietzsche, Malthus, Weismann and Vogüé, tried to justify the aggressors with talk about "the survival of the fittest," "the benefit" of wholesale slaughter, the "inevitability" of conflicts and wars between peoples.

Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, of the French Academy, asserted that "as long as there are two men, bread, and money on earth and a woman between them, war is inevitable." "People like Vogüé," Tolstoy wrote, "and others, who, in preaching the law of evolution, claim that war is not only inevitable but even beneficial and therefore desirable, are frightful people, horrible in their moral perversion."

On the other hand, Tolstoy also sharply condemned the hypocritical "peace-makers," who lulled the vigilance of the peoples by flowery but empty talk about the peaceability of the governments of their own countries. In a letter to a group of Swedish intellectuals, written as early as 1899, he pointed out the true significance of the Hague Peace Conference, convened at the time on the initiative of the Russian tsar and which proved to be a great disappointment to all sincere believers in the "peaceability" of its initiators and participants. Exposing the "emptiness, idleness and hypocrisy" of the Hague Conference, Tolstoy called attention to Russian tsarism's cruelty, to the American government's "mania for conquest," and to the military conflicts raging at the time. He expressed his horror at the attacks of "the Americans against the Cubans, the Spaniards against the Americans, the Germans against the French, and the like."

With deep anxiety the great writer watched the rise of militarism in Europe and America and the armaments race. He pointed out that in Europe there were already 28,000,000 men under arms in the nineties of the last century and that the threat of a world-wide slaughter was becoming more imminent.

It was his awareness of this danger that compelled Tolstoy, despite old age and ill health, to accept the invitation of the organizers of the Stockholm peace congress and to prepare a speech for it. Tolstoy was very anxious that the Stockholm Congress should not turn out to be a repetition of the Hague Conference. "The whole truth must be told," he wrote in the plan of his speech. "How can one talk of peace in the capitals of kings, emperors, and army commanders for whom we have as much respect as the French have for *M. de Paris*?¹ Should we cease lying, we would be driven out of here at once."

Tolstoy did not get the chance to tell the organizers of the Congress the truth to their faces. Alarmed by his acceptance of their invitation, the organizers kept postponing the congress on various pretexts. Tolstoy himself commented on this in the following words: "I believe—this is not modest on my part—that the workers' strike was not the only reason why the Congress was postponed, but that my letter and my newspaper article played a part too. 'What shall we do with him?'—They couldn't drive me away so they put off the Congress."

The Congress, which was scheduled for August 14, 1909, was postponed; the official reason given was a workers' strike. But many newspapers wrote at the time that the main reason was a different one—fear of Tolstoy. It is significant that the organizers of the Congress did not publish the text of Tolstoy's speech when they received it, nor was the speech read at the Congress when it was finally held in 1910. The text of Tolstoy's speech was first published that same year by the Russian University in Los Angeles.

¹The executioner.

From the platform of the Stockholm Congress Tolstoy planned to appeal to people of good will, primarily to the millions of ordinary people, and urge them not to submit to their governments, not to take up arms, not to shed blood in fratricidal wars. As at the time of the Hague Conference, he had little faith that the governments of imperialist states would come to an understanding and agree to disband their armies. "It's like asking merchants and bankers not to sell above net cost and to distribute wealth without making profits, thereby doing away with money, which would have been rendered unnecessary."

Yet Tolstoy never doubted that wars were not inevitable, that they could be prevented. This could and must be done by the plain people of all countries. He urged the plain people of the whole world to say to the warmongers: "Go, merciless and godless tsars, mikados, ministers, bishops, abbots, generals, editors, swindlers, or by whatever name you may be called, go under cannon and bullet, fire yourselves. We do not want to and we will not." In the name of the plain people Tolstoy said to the rulers: "Leave us in peace to plough, to sow, to build, to feed you drones."

Tolstoy linked the fight against militarism with the preaching of a new religion, "purged" of the church dogma, a religion that advocated non-resistance to evil. This was one of the typical contradictions in his philosophy.

For us, the lasting value of Tolstoy's fight against militarism is the deep humanity that imbues his appeals for peace. One can be a believer or atheist and hold different political or social views, yet be among those who fight against the warmongers. Tolstoy's voice rings out today in the noble fight for peace, the voice of a great humanist who passionately desired good and happiness for all men.

Konstantin LOMUNOV

LEO TOLSTOY ON ART AND LITERATURE

T

HE essential nature of the aesthetic emotion aroused in us by pictorial art—in the broad sense of the word—is the memory of images. The essential nature of the aesthetic emotion aroused in us by music is the subconscious memory of emotions and of transitions from one emotion to another.

A feeling for poetry is the conscious memory of life with its images and emotions.

Childhood (taken from the second version, 1852)

Simplicity—that is the quality I wish to acquire above all others.

Diary, August 15, 1852

I positively cannot write without a purpose and without the hope of being useful.

Diary, November 28, 1852

The test of a person's understanding of a subject is his ability to explain it in simple language to an uneducated person.

Diary, October 16, 1853

Remember, the more difficult and painful the circumstances, the greater the need for firmness, energy and resolution, and the greater the harm done by apathy. Weak spirits take the opposite course.

Diary, October 27, 1853

...*The aim of every composition should be usefulness, that is, to do good.*

...The theme of a composition should be a lofty one.

Literary Rules, (1853-1854)

The hero of my story, a hero whom I love with every fibre of my being, whom I have tried to reproduce in all his beauty, and who has always been, is and will always be beautiful, is truth.

Sevastopol in May, a story (1855)

No amount of artistic talent excuses one from participation in public life.

Diary, October 14, 1856

Novels teach one to know people...

Notebook, July, 1856

...I agree with you entirely that having embarked on a writing career, one must take it seriously and dedicate one's whole life to it. . . .

Letter to A.V. Druzhinin, September 21, 1856

It is not the artist's aim to prove an indisputable solution to a problem but to make the reader love life in its innumerable and inexhaustible manifestations. If I were told I could write a novel which would indisputably prove my private views on all social problems, I would not spend even two hours of work to writing it, but if I were told that what I wrote would be read twenty years from now by people who are children today, and that it would make them laugh and cry and love life, I would devote all my life and all my energy to writing it.

Letter to P.D. Boborykin, July-August, 1865

Poetry is a fire kindled in man's heart. This fire burns, warms, and gives light.

There are some people who feel the heat, some who feel the warmth, some who see only the light, and there are some who do not even see the light. The majority, however, the mob—those who judge the poets—feel neither the heat nor the warmth but see only the light. And so they and everybody else think that it is the mission of poetry to give light, and nothing more. Such people become writers themselves and go about with a lantern, lighting up life. (Naturally, it seems to them that light is needed most where it is dark and confused.) Others believe that warmth is the important thing and artificially warm up what is easily warmed. (Good poets, too, sometimes do both when the fire does not burn in them.) But the true poet involuntarily and with pain burns, and burns others. And that is the whole point.

Notebook, October 28, 1870

The artist of sound, lines, colours, words, even thoughts, is in a frightful position when he does not believe in the importance of the ideas he strives to express.

Diary, November 5, 1873

A work of literature is the fruit of love. But love without deeds is dead. Do a deed of love and we will come to love what you love.

Letter to P.D. Golokhvastov, September 6-10, 1875

I cannot but wish you what to me constitutes the greatest joy in life—work, with faith in its importance and merit.

Letter to I.S. Turgenev, October 27, 1878

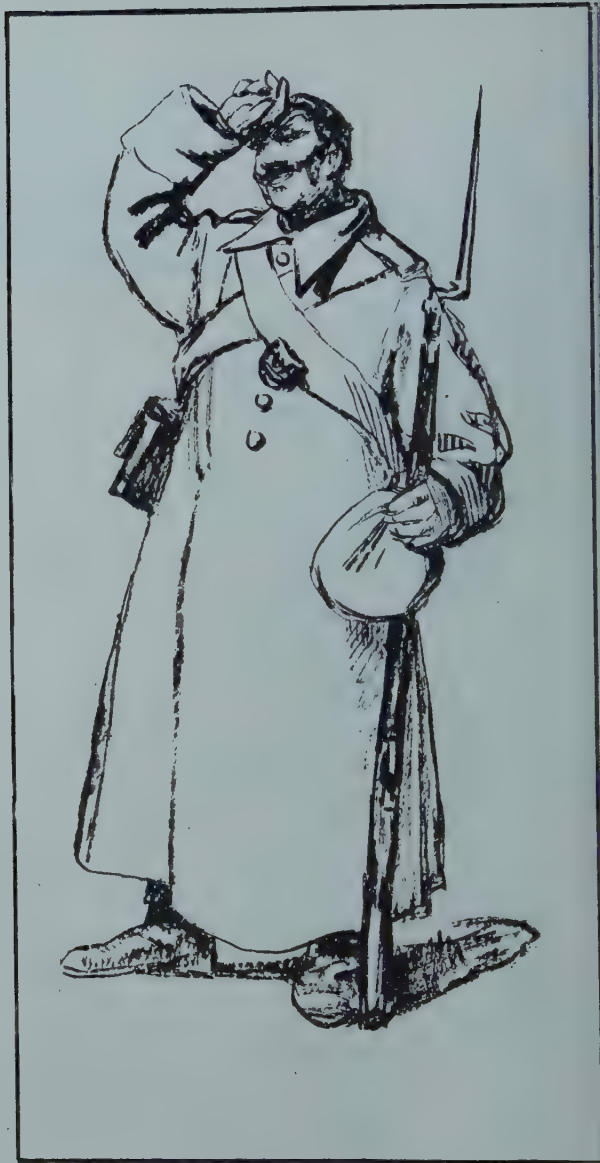
When I was not living my own life, but was borne on the waves of an alien life . . . I derived pleasure from the reflection of life of all kinds in poetry and art. I enjoyed observing life in that mirror of art; but when I started to search for the meaning of life, when I felt the need for living myself, I found that mirror either unnecessary, superfluous and ridiculous, or painful.

Confession (1881)



Uncle Fyodor and Seryoga (*Three Deaths*)

Arkadi Plastov



Art, if it is genuine art, must be comprehensible to all, especially to those in whose name it is produced. The state of our art strikingly exposes our artists, revealing that they have neither the desire, the skill nor the capacity to be useful to the people. . . . Only when men of science and art, living among the people and like the people, without claiming special privileges, offer their scientific or artistic services to the people, to be accepted or rejected by them, will science and art serve the people. . . .

Those who consider themselves the exponents of the science and art of a given period always imagine that they have performed, are performing, and, what is more, are about to perform, extraordinary miracles, and that they alone are the makers of science and art—without them these simply do not exist. Such was the belief of the sophists, scholasts, alchemists, cabbalists, and talmudists, such is the belief of our scientific science and our art for art's sake. . . .

. . . The position of scientists and artists is a privileged one because science and art (in our day) in our world do not represent the entire intellectual activity of all of mankind without exception, which has advanced its best forces to serve science and art, but the activity of a small circle of people, who enjoy a monopoly in this field and call themselves scientists and artists, and who have distorted the very concepts of science and art, deprived their vocation of all meaning and devoted themselves to entertaining their own small circle of drones and relieving it of oppressive boredom.

What, Then, Must We Do?, a treatise, 1882-1886

I understand you and have felt the same way myself, fearing that the work of a writer might be egoistical, but I know that from it, when it serves a great truth, I derive my greatest happiness, and that it is therefore my highest vocation.

Letter to P. I. Biryukov, April 14, 1888

Whether a work of art is good or bad depends on what the artist says, how he says it, and how deeply he feels it. 1) For an artist to know what he ought to say he must know what is characteristic of all mankind but, at the same time, still unknown to it, that is, to mankind. To know that an artist must be on a level with the highest culture of his day, and, what is most important, he must not live the life of an egoist but must take part in the common life of all mankind. And therefore an ignorant or a selfish person can never be a significant artist. 2) For an artist to say well what he wishes to say (by the word "say" I mean any artistic expression of ideas) he must have skill. And to acquire skill he must work much and long, subjecting his work to his inner judgement alone. 3) For an artist to speak from the depths of his heart he must love his subject. And therefore he must never speak of things to which he is indifferent and about which he can remain

silent but must speak only of those things of which he cannot help speaking, which he loves passionately.

Of these three basic requirements for the production of a work of art, the last is the most important. Without it, without love of the subject, at least without a sincere and truthful approach to it, no work of art is possible.

Letter to V. A. Goltsev, 1889

One evening, early in January 1897, Tolstoy dropped in to see us.

"I went to the French Art Exhibition today," he said. "Oh, I see you have an album of the exhibition," and he took the album from the table and began to leaf through it. "Naked women, naked women again, a multitude of naked women. We were looking at pictures from a French salon on the porch in Yasnaya Polyana one day and a little peasant girl happened to be there with us. 'Look,' she exclaimed, seeing a picture of a naked woman. 'A woman washing herself!' We turned a few pages and again the same thing, and again the little girl remarked: 'Women washing themselves!' She said it every time she saw such a picture. And at the exhibition today I repeated her words: 'A woman washing herself, another woman washing herself!'" And Tolstoy burst out laughing.

Reminiscences of L.N. Tolstoy, A. G. Rusanov, 1897

The course that has brought art to the dead end it has now reached resembles a cone built by piling circles of diminishing size one on top of the other. The farther art is from the feelings common to all the people, the higher removed is the emotional pleasure. And so on to the peak, where all movement must inevitably cease. Thus does art cease to exist—when it reaches the highest limit of exclusiveness. There art ends, and there, in my opinion, the art which is considered art for the upper classes, has already arrived: the art of the decadents, symbolists, naturalists, and of all who consider the purpose of art to be pleasure, and who consider the pleasure they derive from art the measure of its merit.

What Is Art?, a treatise (version), 1897-1898
(From the Archives of the Tolstoy Museum.
Never published before.)

There are a great many people who regard the present situation in art, in poetry and drama as well as in painting and music, as a form of madness which has appeared by accident and will vanish without a trace. This view has no basis whatever. What has been named decadence, that is, extreme exclusiveness in the derivation of pleasure from poetry, is a development common to all of Europe, and one that is not only not growing weaker but is gaining in strength all the time, and which has already won the right to citizenship. Decadence is the name that has been given to the last stage of the theory that claims that art can be art when it is comprehensible to a few people only. If art can be incomprehensible to one person, it can be incomprehensible to ten, to hundreds, to thousands, to millions. It can be comprehensible to only one friend, to a mad king sailing in a swan-shaped boat on his roof. Come to that, it can be comprehensible only to one's closest friend—oneself.

What we call decadence is only the ultimate application of the theory according to which art can be art even when it is incomprehensible to the people.

What Is Art?, a treatise (version), 1897-1898. (From the Archives of the Tolstoy Museum. Never published before with the exception of two sentences that appeared in the anniversary edition of Tolstoy's 90-volume *Complete Works*.)

Our art intended for the amusement of the rich classes not only resembles prostitution but actually is prostitution.

Diary, February 19, 1898

...In art ... the important thing is that which serves as an indication of the joy of unity among people, which attracts people towards unity, or else that which calls people's attention to the suffering that arises from disunity. Or to put it differently: the important thing is that which makes people understand and love what they did not hitherto understand and love.

Letter to V. G. Chertkov, end of May, 1899

We have no faith of *any kind*, hence, false religion, false science, and false art.

Diary, August 21, 1900

Tolstoy said:

"Nowadays people who have nothing to say write books. You read and you do not see the writer. Such writers always seem to be trying to say the 'latest thing.' They block out genuine writers, who, they say, have become old-fashioned. That is a ridiculous idea—old-fashioned! The books of contemporary writers are read only because from them one may learn the 'latest thing.' And that is easier than to read and know genuine writers. These writers of the 'latest thing' cause enormous harm, for they make people fall out of the habit of independent thinking."

Near Tolstoy, A.B. Goldenweiser. (Diary entry of August 20, 1905.)

Before tea Tolstoy's wife Sophia Andreyevna put a record on the gramophone—a song by Denza, a hackneyed tune.

Tolstoy sat down at the round table and listened. Someone stopped the gramophone.

"Whenever I hear that singing or see those donkeys' tails," he said, turning towards me, "I always think of the man from Mars." And he repeated the ideas I had recently heard him express and had written down.¹

¹This is what I wrote down:

"Yesterday I happened to be thinking about science and this is what I wrote in my diary," Tolstoy said. "Suppose some being, say a man from Mars, who knows nothing about life on Earth, should arrive on the Earth. And suppose he were told that 1/100 of the population have set up religion, art, and science for themselves while the remaining 99/100 have none of these.... That alone, I should think, would make it clear to him that life is not good on Earth and that this religion, art, and science cannot be good or true."

"Is such science and such art good?" he asked once more.

"Donkeys' tails," by the way, was a reference to a picture from *Novoye Vremya*, in which a group of French artists had tied a paint brush to a donkey's tail and were feeding the donkey biscuits while the donkey swished its tail across a canvas and "painted." This canvas had been enthusiastically accepted at an art exhibition and found many admirers of the "beauty" of the sunset it was supposed to represent.

Leo Tolstoy in the Last Year of His Life, V. F. Bulgakov. (Diary entry of April 5, 1910.)

Art is the flower of the life of a whole society. The flower of a society such as the society of cruel parasites of our Christian world cannot be good. It must inevitably be depraved and ugly.

Such is the art of our society, which has lately attained the highest degree of depravity and ugliness.

The Choice of Reading — a collection of excerpts by Leo Tolstoy.

I received your kind letter, dear Leonid Nikolayevich. I never knew what a dedication meant,¹ although I believe I myself once dedicated something to someone. I do know, however, that your dedication to me signifies your good will towards me, as I could see from your letter too, and that gives me pleasure.

In your letter you are so sincerely modest in your judgement of your writings that I shall take the liberty of expressing my opinion not of your work, but of writing in general. Perhaps you will find some of my ideas useful.

A person should write, I think, firstly, only when the thing he has to say is so persistent that he cannot get rid of it until he gives expression to it. Any other reasons for writing (ambition, or, even worse, repulsive monetary reasons) even if they are linked with the main reason, the need for self-expression, can only mar the sincerity and merit of the writing. This should be guarded against.

Secondly, a thing which one often comes across and of which, I think, many contemporary writers are guilty (it is a characteristic of all the decadents) is the desire to be different, to be original, to surprise and astound the reader. This is even more harmful than the secondary considerations I mentioned in the first point. This excludes simplicity. And simplicity is a necessary element of beauty. What is simple and artless is not necessarily good, but what is not simple and is artificial cannot be good.

Thirdly, haste in writing. Haste is harmful and, besides, it reveals the absence of a sincere need to express one's thoughts, because if the need is sincere, the writer will spare neither effort nor time to set forth his idea in the most clear-cut and lucid way.

Fourthly, the desire to satisfy the tastes and the demands of the majority of the reading public at the given time. This is particularly harmful and destroys in advance the entire significance of what is being written. For the value of any

¹Leonid Andreyev wrote a letter to Tolstoy asking for his permission to dedicate *The Seven Who Were Hanged* to him.

work of literature is in that while it is not instructive in the direct sense, like a sermon, it reveals to people something new, something they did not know and something that is, in most cases, contrary to what a great number of people consider indisputable. And this (i.e. succumbing to the tastes of the public—*Ed.*) prevents just that.

Perhaps you will find some of this useful. You say that the virtue of your work is sincerity. I admit not only that, but also that its purpose is a good one: the desire to help the people make life better. I also believe that you are sincere in your modest judgement of your work. This does you all the more credit inasmuch as the popularity your work enjoys might easily have caused you to exaggerate its significance. I have read too little of your work, and read it too inattentively—for I read little fiction in general and take little interest in it—but from what I remember and know of your writing I should advise you to put more work into it so as to express your ideas with the highest degree of precision and clarity.

I repeat that your letter gave me a great deal of pleasure. If you happen to be in our parts I shall be happy to see you.

With deep regard,
Leo Tolstoy

Letter to Leonid Andreyev, September 2, 1908
Yasnaya Polyana.

C O M M E N T A R Y

Leo Tolstoy gave a great deal of attention to problems of aesthetics. These problems exercised his mind from the outset of his literary career to the end of his life.

The diaries he kept from his early youth, his notebooks, letters, articles, and works of fiction contain highly interesting statements about art and literature, about numerous artists, writers, actors, musicians, and about different works.

A characteristic feature of Tolstoy's statements is that they are completely free from abstract theorization and are closely connected with the living development of art and literature in his time. Their chief impact is derived from the impassioned defence of realistic art, of art that is true to life, that is intended for millions of people, that is useful and comprehensible to them. To Tolstoy art was never an empty game of words but a serious and important life work, the aim of which was to serve people, to help them make life worthy of man. Tolstoy regarded art as "one of the conditions of human life."

He attacked "gentlemen's" art passionately and wrathfully, he criticized sharply the "art of the upper classes." The powerful barrage of Tolstoy's criticism

was aimed against representatives of modernist, decadent art, formalist and naturalist painters, advocates of abstract, "pure" art, or "art for art's sake," as well as against mere artisans who turned out all kinds of imitations of genuine art.

The great novelist showed most compellingly that a perverted "art for the élite" can exist only in a society divided into hostile classes, in which the upper strata of society have isolated themselves from the people behind an iron wall. "... Our refined art," Tolstoy said, "could have arisen only on the basis of the enslavement of the masses and can continue to exist only as long as that slavery exists ... Liberate the slaves of capital and it will be impossible to produce such refined art."¹

Tolstoy's fight for the democratization of art and literature and for their kinship with the people is one of the strongest points of his aesthetic views, although the "flagrant contradictions" characteristic of his outlook are to be found in his statements on questions of art too. Tolstoy's fight for art that carries a lofty message, for truthfulness and realism in art, for humanism, kinship with the people, for the pioneer spirit that distinguishes genuine artists who search for and discover new paths in art, has fully retained its significance to this day.

It is not the purpose of this selection from Tolstoy's diaries, letters, articles, and works of fiction to present a finished system of Tolstoy's aesthetic views in general. That would require a great deal of space, for literally every one of the ninety volumes of Tolstoy's *Complete Works* contains material of this kind. Our magazine has set itself a far more modest aim—to draw the attention of foreign readers to Tolstoy's views on literature and art and indicate the sources where those views have been expressed in full.

Some of the material is taken from sources little known to the general reader, while some is published here for the first time (excerpts from earlier versions of the treatise *What Is Art?*, for instance).

Konstantin LOMUNOV

¹ Leo Tolstoy, *Complete Works*, Vol. 30, p. 82. (Russian edition;

TOLSTOY MUSEUMS IN MOSCOW

KNOWING Leo Tolstoy, we may be quite sure he would have deprecated the idea of converting the houses he lived in into museums. And, of course, we can see why. He had all he could bear in the last years of his life of those, who were in a hurry to "immortalize" him, of irrepressible reporters and photographers who lay in wait for him in the most unlikely places, of fanatics of all kinds who were eager to win his support for some new sect. The Church had only to excommunicate him for a German cigar manufacturer to come hurrying to him for permission to use the name of Tolstoy on his cigars; he had only to fall dangerously ill for the Holy Synod in its turn to send its spies to him to stage a "prodigal son repentance" scene. "I've grown accustomed to being treated as if I were already dead and gone," he told his friends with a bitter smile.

Nonetheless, there was nothing else posterity could do if it wanted to preserve the memory of the living man than to collect together all his photographs, portraits, manuscripts, and so on, and to preserve the houses he occupied and their appointments exactly as he had left them, that is, to turn them into memorial museums.

Within the ancient mansion on Khamovniki Lane (now Leo Tolstoy Street) in Moscow reigns the murky twilight and muffled silence of a museum. To enter it is to enter a world apart, a world left over from the past. This feeling is heightened by the now unaccustomedly small windows. Everything looks curiously different: the plates no one has eaten off for many a long year, the candles long since snuffed. The solemn silence is broken only by the voice of the guide. But fifty or sixty years ago many voices sounded here. Always there were people waiting about in the hall, from the room of Tolstoy's daughter Tatiana came the sound of laughter, outside idlers peeked over the fence in the hope of catching a glimpse of the author of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*.

Tolstoy bought this house in 1882, when he was already world famous, and it soon became one of the cultural centres of Russia. Ilya Repin was a frequent visitor. This portrait here was painted by Nikolai Ghe, that bust there, made by Prince Paolo Trubetskoy. At this piano sat Rachmaninov and Rubinstein, Taneyev and Scriabin. A host of unconnected persons suddenly become associated in our minds, men heretofore thought of each individually come flocking together, as it were, under Tolstoy's roof. We begin to realize that the words "spokesman of his time," so frequently applied to Tolstoy, are not merely an empty phrase; we see more clearly how he, with his powerful, all-embracing mind, stood head and shoulders above his most celebrated contemporaries.

Tolstoy unfamiliar with Moscow life investigated it with eager impatience. "Although he complained that he was 'getting feeble,' that didn't stop him from walking and travelling from one end of Moscow to the other," recalls one of his contemporaries. "Once I saw him come dashing out of the Alexandrovsky Park after a passing horse car. He ran with youthful vigour, caught up with the car, and jumped on while it was in motion."¹ He was to be seen everywhere, at a congress of Russian naturalists, sitting side by side with Kliment Timiryazev in what we now call the presidium, and at Khitrov Market, where he studied the lower depths of society.

That was not just out of idle curiosity, nor was it merely the interest of an artist in collecting material. Tolstoy's mind was very much occupied at the time with the deep-going contradictions of society and he sought everywhere for the means of resolving them. He was more than a novelist; he was a public figure, the "advocate of the one-hundred-million-strong agricultural people of Russia," as he wrote in one letter. The same Khitrov Market where the Moscow Art Theatre actors went "slumming" in search of prototypes for the characters in Gorky's *The Lower Depths* inspired his scathing treatise *What, Then, Must We Do?* To him, as to many other great writers, the bounds of art seemed too narrow.

Tolstoy's life in Moscow was complicated by a multitude of factors. His numerous family, residing with him in the Khamovniki house, was for the most part in disagreement with his views. The common people he liked best to talk with were looked down upon as "disreputable" and discouraged from calling. One of the "disreputable" thus turned away from the door was the young Gorky, who was then roaming about the country.

From Tolstoy's small study in the Khamovniki house there issued books that shook the world. Here at this desk, familiar to us from numerous pictures, he wrote more than sixty books, among them *The Living Corpse*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Resurrection*, and *The Power of Darkness*.

Involuntarily there comes to mind the admission made by the reactionary journalist Suvorin. "We have two tsars," he wrote in his diary, "Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy. Which of them is the stronger? Nicholas II can do nothing with Tolstoy, cannot shake his throne, whereas Tolstoy is undoubtedly shaking both Nicholas' throne and his dynasty. He is anathematized, the Synod pronounced against him. Tolstoy answers, and his reply is circulated in manuscript form and in the foreign newspapers. Let anyone try to touch Tolstoy—the whole world will raise a howl! And so our administration fights shy, with its tail between its legs."²

One characteristic incident is described to us by Tolstoy's son, Ilya. Prince Dolgoruky, the Governor-General of Moscow, one day sent a "smartly uniformed captain of the gendarmes" to question Tolstoy about the activities of a peasant by the name of Syutayev who was then living in his house. "I will never forget how my

¹ N.N. Apostolov, *The Living Tolstoy*. Moscow, 1928, p. 396. (Russian edition.)

² Op. cit., p. 399.

father received this gendarme in his study," writes Ilya Tolstoy, "I'd never imagined he could get so angry.

"My father neither offered him his hand nor invited him to be seated. Upon hearing his business he replied drily that he did not consider himself obliged to answer such questions. When the officer persisted father turned white as a sheet and showed him the door. 'Go,' he cried in a choking voice, 'for God's sake get out of here quick.' And then, losing all control of his temper, he raised his voice. 'Get out, I tell you,' he shouted, and slammed the door hard behind the dismayed gendarme."¹

In 1901 Gorky, already a well-known writer, was received in this same study. This time he had no trouble gaining admittance, and his call was a prolonged one lasting for more than three hours. Tolstoy was warmly encouraging this representative of a new literary generation whom, perhaps, he was not always able to understand. "You are a real muzhik!" he told him. "You're going to have a hard time among the writers, but don't let that worry you. Just go on talking the way you do, never mind if it does sound rough. Intelligent people will understand."²

Not far from the Khamovniki mansion, on Kropotkin Street, stands another Tolstoy Museum. In this second mansion all the major documents and materials relating to the great writer are collected.

And here too there is a large number of fine portraits of Tolstoy. Here he is standing amidst a group of contributors to the magazine *Sovremennik*: a young officer with the stony face of an aristocrat and a heavy-lidded but penetrating glance. Close by we see him again, now as a very aged man looking out at us with sorrow and reproach.

Included in the collection are photographs of his large family: his favourite brother Nikolai, who, Tolstoy said, was not a great writer only because he lacked ambition; his sisters, aunts, and more distant relatives.

There is also a fine collection of photographs of unknown

Leo Tolstoy's study in the Khamovniki House



¹ Op. cit. p.211.

² *Gorky on Art*, Iskustvo Publishing House, Moscow, 1940, p. 141 (Russian edition).



One of the halls in the Leo Tolstoy State Museum

persons, "St. Petersburg types of the seventies," that introduces us into the atmosphere of *Anna Karenina*.

Then comes a series of portraits in oil and water-colours beginning with the earliest and ending with the latest period of Tolstoy's career, when many great Russian artists literally vied with each other in painting him. Outstanding are the works of Repin, with whom, incidentally, Tolstoy was very angry for painting him barefoot in the midst of a forest. Especially good are two portraits by Mikhail Nesterov. One shows Tolstoy in a snow-white shirt standing in profile against the background of the Yasnaya

Polyana pond, the other depicts him as a young man in the company of Yepishka, the prototype of Yeroshka in *Cossacks*, resting after a morning's hunting.

In the richly representative illustrations section we meet again the old familiar names: Ilya Repin, Mikhail Vrubel, Evgeni Lanceret, Leonid Pasternak. The latter's famous illustrations to *Resurrection* have now come to life anew on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre, where we recognize them in the make-up of the actors. Likewise striking are Lanceret's unique, slightly stylized illustrations to *Haji Murat*. The work of Soviet artists is also represented, notably by Dementi Shmarinov's illustrations to *War and Peace*.

But the museum's greatest treasure is, of course, its collection of manuscripts. These are kept below in what is called the "steel chamber," where the temperature is maintained at a steady level all year round. Here badly frayed pages are restored and strengthened. The innumerable alternate versions and corrected copies with which Tolstoy tormented the type-setters even to a greater degree than Balzac did are now objects of earnest study. This "steel chamber" may be said to be the laboratory that exercises control over all the editions of Tolstoy's works. The scholars working here establish the final texts then circulated throughout the world in millions of copies. Many errors and mutilations by the censors have now been corrected. The text of the 90-volume edition of his collected works, a model academic edition, was carefully checked with the manuscripts preserved in the "steel chamber." The collection is of invaluable assistance to students of Tolstoy's work and creative methods.

Working in this manuscript department is Tolstoy's former private secretary, Professor Nikolai Gusev, who is now completing his *Chronicle of Tolstoy's Life and Work*.

Another point of interest in this museum is its unique library, containing almost everything written about Tolstoy in any language.

In 1909 Tolstoy looked around his study in Khamovniki for the last time. With his wife and friends he was leaving Moscow for Yasnaya Polyana and he was never fated to return.

"The station is thronged. From the train windows it looks like a sea of heads. Closer and closer the crowd presses to the open window of Tolstoy's coach. 'Quiet, quiet, ladies and gentlemen! Tolstoy will say a few words.' At last the crowd falls silent and Tolstoy addresses it. 'I never expected this joy, this overwhelming demonstration of sympathy. Thank you.' Tears choke him. From all sides comes the cry: 'No no, it's we who thank you!'"

"The third warning signal. The train begins to move.

"May you live another hundred years to write more for us! Good-bye!"¹

Good-bye. . . . But it was not good-bye, for never will his thousands and millions of readers say good-bye to Tolstoy. And each new reader will reverently repeat the "thank you" voiced by the Moscow populace that day.

¹ N. N. Apostolov, *ibid*, pp. 505-506.

LENIN PRIZES

INTERNATIONAL LENIN PRIZES FOR PROMOTION OF PEACE AMONG NATIONS

On the 29th of April in the Moscow Kremlin International Lenin Prize "For Promotion of Peace Among Nations" was awarded to Louis Aragon, writer, prominent public figure of France and a staunch fighter for peace.



Anna Seghers (right) and Sahib Singh Sokhi (left) congratulating Nikolai Tikhonov with the award of the Prize.

On the 14th of May International Lenin Prize "For Promotion of Peace Among Nations" was awarded to Nikolai Tikhonov, writer, prominent public figure of the Soviet Union and Chairman of the Soviet Peace Committee.



Louis Aragon (right) and Academician Skobeltsyn

International Lenin prizes "For Promotion of Peace Among Nations" of 1957 were awarded to Kaoru Yasui, Professor of international law at the university of Hosei, chairman of the All-Japanese Council on the Banning of Atom and Hydrogen Weapons (Japan); Arnold Zweig, writer (German Democratic Republic); Louis Saillant, General Secretary of the World Trade Union Federation (France); Artur Lundkvist, writer (Sweden); Josef Hromádka, Professor, Dean of the Komenský Evangelist-Theological Faculty (Czechoslovakia) for their outstanding services in the struggle to preserve and promote peace.

LENIN PRIZES OF 1958 FOR THE MOST OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ART

Lenin prizes of 1958 for the most outstanding achievements in the field of art were awarded to sculptor Mikhail Anikushin for his monument to A. S. Pushkin in Leningrad, to producer Georgi Tovstonogov and the actor Yuri Tolubeyev for the production of Optimistic Tragedy, which was staged at the Pushkin Drama Theatre in Leningrad, to Vakhtang Chabukiani for his production of the ballet Othello and his performance of the role of Othello at the Tbilisi Theatre of Opera and Ballet, and to Dmitri Shostakovich for his Eleventh Symphony, The Year 1905.

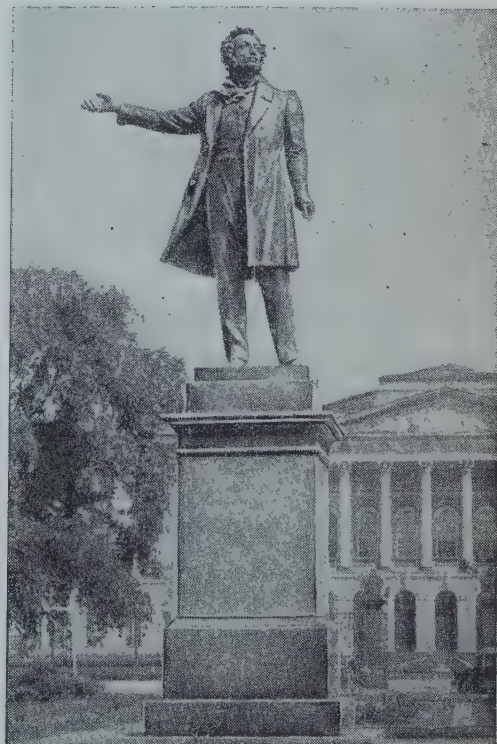
A NEW MONUMENT TO PUSHKIN

During the celebrations of Leningrad's 250th birthday in the summer of 1957, a new monument appeared in one of the city's main squares. It was a monument to Alexander Pushkin, made by the Leningrad sculptor Mikhail Anikushin. It is remarkable for its great expressiveness, for its plastic beauty and the sweeping lines on which it is conceived.

Anikushin began his work in 1948 and in the following years he produced sketches and working models, getting "into the feeling" of the monument and trying to understand the subject thoroughly and translate it into plastic form.

Every Soviet man or woman expects to see in a monument to Pushkin not only the great poet but the author of brilliant prose works, a great dramatist, a historian, critic, and scholar. Neither could the artist neglect all the variety of the poet's work. What is more, everyone has his "own" Pushkin, a special, personal idea of the great poet, and he expects to find his Pushkin in the monument, too.

For this reason the sculptor had a very hard task to accomplish. Nevertheless, however great a scholar and historian Pushkin may have been, his principal characteristic lies in his poetry and this, of course,



had to be the basic idea of the monument. Anikushin has tried to show Pushkin not in solitude or in contemplation but speaking to people, addressing them in the warm, inspiring words. The whole composition of the monument, its very essence strikes you above all for its emotional sensitivity.

An excellent site was chosen for the statue in Leningrad's Square of the Arts, one of the loveliest spots in the city. The well-proportioned railing and the great beauty of the façade of the Russian Museum (formerly the Mikhailov Palace, built by the architect Carlo Rossi) with the two lions flanking the central entrance, form a typical example of Pushkin's St. Petersburg and are a marvellous background for the monument. The whole life of the outstanding Russian poet is linked with St. Petersburg; the city's squares and avenues, palaces and parks are closely connected with his work. The Square of the Arts is a truly historic and artistic spot which sets off the new monument to perfection. Indeed, the monument has now become so much a part of the square that it would be difficult to imagine it anywhere else.



Vakhtang Chabukiani as Othello

The Ballet *Othello*

Our correspondent asked one of the leading Soviet ballerinas, Maya Plisetskaya, to tell us her impressions of the ballet *Othello*. Here is what she said:

The production of the ballet *Othello* is undoubtedly a great event in Soviet art.

This ballet impressed me as being something out of the ordinary. It moved me profoundly and not only me. Everything in this new Georgian production stirs one to the very depths: the profoundly emotional music by Alexei Machavariani, the interesting stage decorations by the artist Soliko Virsaladze, and, what is in my opinion most important, the remarkable work of Vakhtang Chabukiani.

Vakhtang Chabukiani's Venetian Moor can easily be classed with the finest dramatic achievements. It is with increasing emotion and inspiration that the dancer conveys the

growing spiritual drama of a trusting person, who is led to kill the woman whom he considered his ideal.

The ballerina Vera Tsignadze, who dances Desdemona, effectively presents the heroine's feelings, and her infinite love for Othello.

Iago, as presented by the talented dancer Zurab Kikaleishvili, is unforgettable for the preciseness of the image he creates. He is especially fine in the scene with Desdemona's handkerchief and the episode of the oath taken by Iago and Othello, which is filled with dramatic tension.

The young ballerina Eteri Chabukiani gives a colourful picture of Bianca. Margarita Grishkevich is very effective in the role of Emilia.

Odisei Dimitriadis, People's Artiste of the Republic, conducts the orchestra with much temperament.

Vsevolod Vishnevsky's *The Optimistic Tragedy*

The year 1918. Revolutionary Petrograd. . . A Commissar, a woman, has been sent by the Communist Party to a sailors' unit which is headed by Vozhak, an anarchist who recognizes no authority whatsoever. The commissar is faced with the task of transforming this disorganized unit of anarchists into a disciplined regiment which she has to lead into battle.

The play begins with the arrival of the Commissar in the unit and a shot with which she, surrounded by a circle of jeering, threatening sailors, kills the first man who dares to come near her. The play ends with the death of the Commissar. The sailors kneel before this woman who has become their true comrade, teacher, and friend.

The path traversed by this sailors' regiment from the opening to the closing episodes is a long and difficult one. The road from Petrograd to the Crimea is painful, and saturated with blood, a path of battles and retreats, of victories and losses. That endless road which sometimes runs on ahead, sometimes makes a sharp turn, constantly appears in the performance, and is indicative of the great distances that have been covered and of the heights that have not as yet been stormed.

This path, which is measured by hundreds of miles and thousands of human lives, at the same time reflects the inner development of the people, their spiritual growth. While interpreting the play as a heroic tragedy, and striving for monumental form, the producer Georgi Tovstonogov also lends ear to the beating of human hearts. We are shown not only remarkable historical deeds, but living, tangible people, people with their loves and hatreds, "each of whom had his family. . . his sweetheart. . ."

One of the most powerful scenes in the play is the farewell ball of the sailors.

Strains of a waltz, whose melody pierces the heart, come floating over the air; couples dance slowly; sailors,

with their arms around their sweethearts, pass before us. An old sailor says something tender, something comforting to his daughter; a woman with her child in her arms sees her husband off. . . .

Then the stage begins to revolve slowly and those who had just been embracing their dear ones are now seen marching with their rifles at their shoulders. Nothing is left of the heavy hull of the ship or the rails of the gangway or the deck. All that remains is the audience and those sailors marching in military step, their gaze fixed straight ahead of them, while behind them is the boundless sky and infinity, immortality whither they are going. . . .

Thus before our very eyes are individual lives and feelings of scores of people presented in close succession and in sweeping generalizations.

The characters are presented with great force and vital truth: the Commissar who captivates the spectator with her passionate conviction, marvellous spiritual radiance and purity; a sailor-communist, who manfully goes to his death, and the Finnish sailor, Vainonen, boundlessly loyal to the cause of the Revolution.

The actor Yuri Tolubeyev in the part of Vozhak gives a striking portrayal of this stupid, oppressive man, of his vicious strength, cold cruelty, and bestial stubbornness. The moral victory of the Commissar, who succeeds in winning the sailors away from Vozhak's influence, is symbolical of the inevitable triumph of humanism and justice over dark, anti-human instincts and forces.



Scene from "The Optimistic Tragedy"

THE ELEVENTH SYMPHONY

Dmitri Shostakovich has called his Eleventh Symphony, which is dedicated to the first Russian revolution, *The Year 1905* (see Issue No. 3, 1958, which contains an article by Innokenti Popov about this symphony).

This symphony was first performed in Moscow on October 30, 1957, when it was rendered by the State Orchestra of the U.S.S.R., Natan Rakhlin conducting. Four days later it was heard in Leningrad with Evgeni Mravinsky holding the baton.

This composition immediately won the recognition of the public. Its frequent renditions during concerts in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and on the radio attracted the attention of many foreign conductors as well. In January 1948 Malcolm Sargent conducted the Eleventh Symphony in England; the American conductor Leopold Stokowski included *The Year 1905* in his programme of concerts given in the Soviet Union. Following his performances

in Moscow in June, the Soviet newspaper *Literaturnaya Gazeta* wrote: "Stokowski succeeded in conveying the dynamic, life-asserting emotion of the symphony with such ardour, he so effectively revealed the beauty of the popular mass-movement that the finale sounded like a heroic hymn of coming victory."

In Japan Takashi Ueda conducts the symphony. It has also been included in the repertoire of orchestras in Berlin, Bonn, Prague and other European cities. In Paris it was performed in the presence of the composer by the National Orchestra, André Cluytens conducting. The music critic of *Lettres Françaises* wrote at the time: "It is music which is as fascinating as the sea!"

Less than a year has elapsed since the first performance of the symphony *The Year 1905*, yet hundreds of thousands of listeners all over the world have already worthily appraised this new outstanding work by Dmitri Shostakovich.

Such rapid, widespread success of a symphonic composition is a rather rare phenomenon in the history of music.



Partisans Escorting French Prisoners-of-War (*War and Peace*)

Dementi Shmarinov




Pierre at Rayevsky's Battery (*War and Peace*)

Dementi Shmarin

A SCIENTIST'S DREAMS

DREAMS—A MENTAL STIMULANT

 OR many the word "dream" means something shifting, vague and unreal. "Day-dreaming" is often considered the privilege of youth which easily breaks away from everyday reality in its rapturous aspirations. But dreams of the future enter Soviet life not simply as abstract thought but as a mental stimulant. With the dream begins the planning. Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, considered fantasy to be a quality of the greatest value, and was himself a dreamer.

In the twenties he dreamed of building between twenty and fifty electric power stations, and to put power centres all over the country, each with a radius of action of 200-400 versts away from peat, water, coal, oil, and solar energy. He dreamed of drawing up a state plan for electrification, and of making all Russia—both industrial and agricultural—run on electricity.

These dreams were not utopian. They were founded on strictly scientific foresight and a passionate faith in the triumph of human reason. In 1960 the Soviet Union will produce more than 300,000 million kilowatt hours of electricity, compared with the 500 million kilowatt hours produced in the twenties! That is the speed with which Lenin's dream has become reality.

THE HEART OF INDUSTRY

Academician Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, for a long time head of the Power Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., was one of the main architects of the first plan for the electrification of Russia. He recently recalled how, when they distributed the draft plan for the electrification of Russia to the delegates to the Eighth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, its compilers inserted in each a sheet of paper on which was drawn a large heart bearing the word "Electrification". The heart was linked with five squares, standing for the most vital and urgent needs of the people—houses, food, clothes, transport and culture.

"We all understood very clearly," recalls Academician Krzhizhanovsky, "that without our own power it was impossible to build our own industry. Every scientist and scholar considered it his prime duty to play his part in the fulfilment of the vitally important national economic task. In my mind's eye, I can see the granite-harnessed

Reportage

Dnieper, the giant power stations springing up on the Volga and the impressive work now being done to build the Bratsk Power Station on the Angara and it is with pride that I remember that I too have made my contribution."

The thoughts of the 86-year-old Academician from the past and present turn to the future. Today Soviet scientists are building a unified power system covering the whole Soviet Union. This system is to link all the power resources of the country and the different types of energy so that all branches of the national economy everywhere will get the power they need by the most efficient and cheapest means.

Asked how the scientists understand the unified power system, Krzhizhansky replied: "It is like a constantly developing organism. At the present stage every power station and each region of the unified power grid can be considered only as a component part of the whole. All must be linked by transmission lines. We are therefore faced with a difficult problem, which can only be solved by a strong scientific team which includes scientists of many specialties in the field of power—the problem of finding the links which will ensure the most advantageous development of the unified system. Our experts have laid the scientific basis for such a system covering the European part of the Soviet Union and have examined the question of a unified power grid for Siberia."

SCHOOL FOR DREAMERS

Siberia can in fact be termed a "school for dreamers." Quite recently only hunters in their canoes were to be seen travelling from camp to camp along its rivers. Where heavy machinery and turbines are being built today for the new power stations of the Soviet Union and People's China, there were until as recently as the forties only hunting reserves. Sergei Zalygin, the Siberian writer who lives in one of the comfortable houses belonging to the Novosibirsk Engineering Institute, recalls how about thirty years ago a little girl got lost on this very spot near the river Plyushchikha.

"They searched for her for a long time in the dense and unpopulated forest," he said, "and she was found only with great difficulty. Today she has grown up and is now lecturing on hydro-technical installations at the Institute. She is my wife. When we look back on this far-off incident, she laughs and says, 'That's nothing! The search for me lasted only one day, but at about the same time two of our friends, grown men, got lost where the Rail Transport Institute now is. They looked for them for several days and nights, with torches and bells.'"

Siberia seems by its very history and nature to be destined to make mankind's daring dreams come true. It is almost 3,500 kilometres from North to South, and 7,000 kilometres from East to West. The Siberian lowlands alone occupy an area equal to two-thirds of the area of a country like India or six countries like Japan or Italy. The length of floatable or navigable rivers is about 100,000 kilometres—more than twice the distance round the equator. Today

the dream of taming these rivers and tapping their vast reserves of power is becoming reality.

The electric power system of Siberia will link the power stations of Western Siberia with the mighty hydro-electric installations on the Yenisey and its tributaries. It is difficult even to imagine the tremendous significance that the ability freely to transmit power over several thousands of kilometres, switching hundreds of thousands—even millions—of kilowatts will have in the economic development of the country as a whole. This year the Kuzbas-Novosibirsk-Kuzbas line will come into operation. Its very name indicates that it envisages an exchange of power. In winter, when as a result of the reduced flow of water the output reserves of the Novosibirsk Hydro-electric Power Station on the Ob will decline, thermal stations in the Kuzbas will “pay back” what they receive from Novosibirsk in the summer.

The first stage in the development of a unified Siberian power grid will include the full resources of the Novosibirsk Power Station and the first sections of the stations at Kamensk on the Ob and Krasnoyarsk on the Yenisey.

It is already possible to look into the future and see the Siberian power network in action—in the power system laboratory of the Western Siberian Department of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. This department is the embryo of the giant scientific centre which is to grow up in Siberia in the coming years.

In order to unify all the country's power systems, it is necessary to combine the efforts of many groups of scientists and engineers.

“To create a high-voltage network,” says one of its designers, Professor Veniamin Veitz, “means more than just building it. It also means putting power on to a high technical level. When that is done, a single centre will be able to control the power of the whole country. Surplus power from the Far East will easily be switched to Moldavia or Estonia. Giant power stations with their fabulously cheap current plus atomic power stations will, side by side with ordinary stations, be the keystones of the Unified Power Grid. Uniting them in an unbreakable ring, the country's great power system will embrace an area of more than 22 million square kilometres—three times as large as the United States and four and a half times as large as the countries of Western Europe taken together. Utopia? No, a key aspect of the long-term economic plan.

REPORTAGE FROM THE FUTURE

On one of his imaginary walks in the country of the future, a Soviet writer of science-fiction describes a visit to a great iron and steel plant in this way:

“The first thing that caught my eye was the absence of blast furnaces. The great airy buildings stretched for many miles. Through the greenery of the surrounding gardens ran arrow-like railway tracks and well-surfaced roads.”

This fantasy is already by no means all that fantastic. Such a visit is already something of the not-so-distant future. Certainly, the present-day iron and steel

mill, with its furnaces smoking day and night, is still far removed from the writer's ideal. But in writing of the plant of the future, the author in fact develops an idea which has already in part been realized—the idea of uninterrupted smelting. In essence it is simple: the metal must not be allowed to cool until it has been made into stock of the required size and shape. But to put this idea into practice required a great deal of effort by the Soviet iron and steel men—both research workers and the men on the job—who gave it flesh and blood and who built the installation. The liquid steel flows straight from the ladle between water-cooled rollers and is subjected to constant rolling until it obtains the required shape.

Academician Bardin, one of the outstanding figures of Soviet industry, a Hero of Soviet Labour who started out as an ordinary worker, is directing research in metallurgy. The aim is to get iron straight from the ore, by-passing the pig-iron stage. This process is called direct reduction of iron. The question is indeed that of the factory of the future where we shall probably see giant vertical mills in which the ore will be crushed into the finest powder. The furnaces, on the other hand, will be small. The powdered ore will immediately enter a stream of gas. The burning gas will take the oxygen necessary for combustion from the ore and in this way reduce the metal. Minute particles of pure iron will gather at the bottom of the rotating drum. A powerful magnetic separator will separate the pure iron, and this metallic powder will become the raw material for “building up” steel of any quality and type. Through the addition of selected metals, the steel would be given whatever qualities are required: hardness, heat-resistance, viscosity, etc.

THE POEM OF THE MACHINES

No one would take upon himself the task of prophesying how tomorrow's technology will develop, but there is nothing to prevent us dreaming about it—and, what is more, dreaming in a realistic way, not only because our dreams are scientifically founded, but also because in a country where the fruits of man's labour belong to the workers themselves, there are no barriers to the advance of man's intellect and the realization of his projects.

Let us look at some more of the realistic dreams of Soviet scientists.

Here, for example, is how Professor Vadim Trapeznikov, one of the leaders of the Soviet Academy of Sciences' work in the field of automation, views the technology of the future. This is his conception of the solution of the problem of the remote control of industrial enterprises:

“The sign at the entrance says ‘Regional Telecontrol.’ Behind a hedge in a green field stand several small helicopters—the duty ‘cars.’ A little way off stands an austere, bluish-coloured building. We enter and mount the broad staircase. On the landing are several doors. Each bears an inscription: ‘Mines,’ ‘Power,’ ‘Chemical Production,’ ‘Food Production.’ From those rooms are controlled the many undertakings of a large region—its factories and plants, its mines.

"We enter a hall. In the centre stands a raised rostrum, like that of a conductor—which indeed it is, for the engineer on duty is in essence a 'conductor.' His 'orchestra' is made up of all the undertakings in an entire industrial area. He watches over their work and controls it. Only from time to time do two or three men put in an appearance at a plant to repair or inspect a shop.

"In the hall are well-designed panels in which night and day glow multi-coloured lights, mounted in charts giving the lay-out of an installation, a chemical apparatus, a furnace or a mine.

"Any occurrence at a factory scores of kilometres from the control panel is immediately transmitted by sensitive instruments and brought to the notice of the engineer on duty. He instructs the mechanics telling them where to go—say, to shop 18b of a chemical factory, where machine number 210 is giving trouble.

"The mechanic, taking his tool-kit, climbs into a helicopter and within a few minutes touches down in the factory yard and makes his way to the shop concerned. Within a very short time a green light glows on the panel—the installation has been repaired and set in motion again. But such incidents are rare. The engineers, technicians, and machine-setters spend their hours of duty reading, studying or talking. Meanwhile, the machines, the automatic factories and mines continue to work, controlled from a distance."

We will turn aside a moment from the future in order to underline the practicability of these dreams. There are already in the Soviet Union multipurpose high-speed electronic computers like the BESM, the Strela, and many others. They are being used as the basis for making different types of "control machines." The remarkable feature of these machines is that they work on the information which they receive (for example, data concerning changes in the course of a technological process, constantly "reported" by electric measuring instruments) in accordance with a pre-set programme and, instantaneously completing hundreds of complex calculations, draw up and send to the executive mechanism electric "instructions" which the latter obediently carries out. Thus, electronic machines are already in fact mechanizing not only physical work, but also some part of the mental work in the production process.

COAL BURNING BELOW GROUND

But let us return to the dreams of the scientist.

"Where it is advantageous," Trapeznikov continued, sketching his picture of the technology of the future with bold strokes, "flames roar under the earth by the will of man, transforming whole seams of coal into useful gas which is brought up to the surface for use as raw material in the chemical industry and fuel for power stations. The age-old dream of Dmitri Mendeleyev regarding the underground gasification of coal is becoming reality. There are mines where coal combines work under remote control. They excavate seam after seam and send a stream of coal to the surface. In others water does the 'digging.' The seam is

broken up and the coal is brought to the surface by a high-pressure jet. It enters a chemical factory untouched by hand. Here, in shops where there are no people whatsoever, automatic installations make the coal into hundreds of different products, including dyes, petrol, synthetic yarns, rubber, plastics."

These dreams too are in fact forecasts based not only on laboratory data but also on industrial practice. Soviet scientists and engineers were the first to carry out the underground gasification of coal seams by the most tempting method, in which both the preparation of the seam (i. e., the installation of an underground gas generator) and the whole process is controlled from the surface. Such an underground gasification plant bears little resemblance to an ordinary gas works or coal mine. One is above all struck by the quiet. There is no noise of underground machinery, no locomotives whistling, no rumble of coal sorters. There is no pithead gear and no trains taking away the coal. Nor are there any great slag heaps, which are usually the first thing to strike the eye because of their size and the smoke from the smouldering pyrites.

Such underground gasification stations are already in operation in the Donets Basin, while another—the largest—is being built in Central Asia. The distinguishing feature of the latter is that it is the first attempt to use the gas itself for gas rather than steam turbines.

As regards the extraction of coal with the aid of water, this engineer's dream is already reality at mines in the Kuznetsk Basin. The coal cut by the jets of water is borne to the surface by the same means and washed on the way.

GRAIN FOR ALL

Plenty does not come of its own accord. It must be worked for. This is being tackled by hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers—men and women who love their job, and who are sparing no effort in doing it. According to the estimates of the scientists, if known methods of increasing yield and livestock productivity were everywhere applied in a thoughtful way, it would be possible, for example, to produce enough wheat in the Soviet Union to meet the needs of almost the whole population of the world.

Of course, in a large-scale socialist economy increased yield is closely linked with the extensive use of machinery. Two years before the Revolution there were 165 tractors in Russia—all made abroad. Two years after the Revolution, Lenin dreamed of hundreds of thousands. Today 1,500,000 are at work in the Soviet fields. During the Sixth Five-Year Plan alone more tractors will be produced than during all the previous five-year plans. This great army of machinery will now be at the disposal of the strengthened collective farms, who will pay for it out of their own resources. Hitherto, they, as it were, hired it.

"And the machines will get 'wiser' and 'more efficient,'" commented Dmitri Brezhnev, vice-president of the Lenin National Agricultural Academy.

Looking into the future of agriculture, he described some of the problems on which the scientists are working.

They are trying to speed up agricultural machinery. They take the view that the present speed of tractors cannot be justified. It was simply translated from horsepower, as it were, together with the ploughs, seeders and other implements. The scientists are considering new principles for working the soil. The development of vibro-ploughs and ditchers is expedient. They would do the work of the existing machines and use only half the amount of energy. The scientists are also putting forward new ideas regarding the use of machines. For example, the late professor Valerian Svirbshchevsky proposed that all the harvested wheat should be taken straight to special mills where automatic machines would thresh and clean it. It would then no longer be necessary to waste energy to transport threshers (the heaviest part of a combine) about the field, and the straw would be gathered in at the same time as the grain.

The scientists are carrying out bold experiments. An electric charge in water causes tremendous hydraulic pressure. This phenomenon, which inventor Lev Yutkin is studying at the Leningrad Polytechnical Institute, can be utilized in farming. The electrohydraulic effect could be used to smash the boulders which make the employment of mechanical means for working the soil difficult in the northern regions. It is expected that its use will greatly accelerate the sinking of deep wells. It is hoped to apply it in the development of machines milling coarse fodders and pasteurizing products.

"It is impossible to envisage all the ways in which the mechanization and electrification of agriculture can develop. It is difficult in the course of one interview to describe what is already being done today and planned for tomorrow," said Brezhnev. Therefore, he briefly mentioned only a few things, such as the use of high-frequency currents to dry hay. Under such treatment lucerne retains its natural green colour and almost all its other qualities. The use of these currents to dry fruit has produced remarkable results: apples have been transformed into pastilles that melt in the mouth.

MAN CONTROLS WEATHER

The problem of the control of weather and precipitation, upon which yield frequently depends, has for a long time agitated all who have anything to do with farming.

Academician Brezhnev tells of the things that have already been achieved in this field. Artificial rain was first caused by the Soviet physicist and meteorologist Fedoseyev more than twenty years ago in Ashkhabad. From a plane he dusted clouds with calcium chlorate crystals. The crystals greedily absorbed the moisture in the clouds, drops were formed and rain began to fall.

Many experiments in the field of controlled precipitation are being carried out by the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences.

OUR TASTES WILL BE CONSIDERED

The most varied scientific achievements applied in farming are all directed towards the main aim—the all-round satisfaction of the demands of the consumer. Soviet scientists underline that they do not intend to take the *per capita* consumption of produce in capitalist countries as their yardstick. They base themselves on the fact that the economic basis of consumption in a socialist country is fundamentally different. It is growing all the time. Suffice it to say that as regards rates of growth of consumption during the last 15-18 years Soviet primacy is indisputable.

The structure and standards of food consumption are also shaped by stable factors such as natural and climatic differences, national tastes, and social conditions. Scientifically elaborated standards of feeding evolved by Soviet scientists with a view to the all-round development of a healthy individual form the basis for food consumption in the Soviet Union. Research workers believe that, against the background of improving material standards and cultural levels, the structure of consumption and demand will change not only quantitatively but also—and mainly—qualitatively. Products of lower food value will yield place to others of greater value. In the Soviet Union, the Food Institute of the Academy of Medical Sciences as well as many local organizations are engaged in the study of the demand for food and also the actual consumption of food products. This is of great importance because the Soviet Union covers many climatic zones. Although the general level of calory intake is approximately the same, the food of the northerners and southerners, and also of the different nationalities, varies greatly. Acquired tastes and eating habits are often extremely hard to change and the food industry has to adapt itself to them.

DREAMERS' FORUM

Not so long ago I attended a forum organized by *Yunyi Tekhnik* (Young Mechanic) the youngest and smallest magazine—it has only been in existence for a year and each copy will slip easily into your pocket. Such a make-up was specially chosen. The magazine is the constant companion of every youngster interested in things to do with technology. Alongside drawings of atomic ships, you will find useful tips on how to make models of the miraculous machines of the morrow.

The large lecture hall of the Polytechnical Museum—one of the oldest centres of scientific education in our country—was packed with inquisitive young people. They heard the scientists' thoughts about the future—thoughts born on the spot, on the platform, during friendly and confidential discussion. These thoughts did not claim to give a full picture of mankind's future life. The scientists were thinking aloud about things which interested them most in their respective fields. It was this free and easy quality, this lack of any predetermined agenda which was the best part of the meeting.

OPEN SESAME!

To the rostrum went Academician Dmitri Shcherbakov. He is about seventy, but the years haven't bent the well-built figure of this untiring traveller. His movements still retain the lightness of youth.

It was from him—the Academician is the secretary of the Department of Geographical Sciences of the Academy of Sciences—that we heard in 1957 that there were no longer any “blank spots,” no more unexplored territories within the boundaries of the Soviet country and saw the evidence of it in the first complete geological map of the Soviet Union.

“The torch of science” of which Mendeleev once spoke, has become a powerful searchlight and has thrown such a blinding light on the bowels of the earth that we now have fabulous power over the future. The long-term plan for the national economy imperatively demands new raw material reserves—it even cites figures and areas. The thesis recently developed in a speech by Pyotr Antropov, the Minister of Geology and Mineral Deposits of the U.S.S.R., seems almost fantastic: “Find raw materials where we need them most!” And true enough the caves of the subterranean kingdom are obediently opening. The limited imagination of the old story-tellers filled them only with precious stones. But today we also find there iron and manganese ores, coal, copper and lead, nickel, zinc and bauxite, tungsten and mercury.

We have here named only those treasures of which the Soviet Union has the largest known reserves in the world. To build up a reserve of mineral raw materials sufficient to satisfy the needs of the national economy for the next 40-50 years—this is the bold task which the investigators of the bowels of the earth set themselves.

But Academician Shcherbakov tried to look into the still more distant future.

“METAL FAMINE”—AN UNFOUNDED FANTASY

He launched straight away into an argument.

“You sometimes hear talk,” he said, “about the coming exhaustion of our mineral resources. It is indeed true that the discovery of large new deposits is becoming less and less frequent, but does this mean that soon we shall not know where to get the iron, the titanium, the aluminium, and some other metallic and non-metallic substances that we need, and that the only salvation lies in the use of the mineral resources of the Moon and Mars, as many science-fiction authors are inclined to think?”

Academician Shcherbakov is not opposed to fantasy, but his dreams about the future are completely practical.

“Such ultra-cosmic measures will scarcely be necessary,” he said. “There are also ‘earthly’ means. Here is one: For lack of rich ores, we can use those which are less rich but more common. But this has meaning only when ores are utilized in every way, so that all their useful component parts are extracted and nothing

thrown away. This method of treating basalt, for example, which is to be found everywhere in large quantities, makes it possible to get 15 million tons of aluminium oxide, 13 million tons of iron oxide, 6 million tons of magnesium oxide, two million tons of titanium oxide, and very much else from every 100 million tons of ore.

"So far, this is only a dream—but so, not long ago, was the method of extracting aluminium from nephelite. Today this method evolved by Soviet engineers yields scarce potash and soda, excellent cement and even the rare element gallium in addition to aluminium.

"But ores are not the earth's only riches. Deep below the surface there are also colossal reserves of heat which we have not as yet tapped. At Kamchatka, on the far-eastern fringe of the Soviet Union, test drillings are already being made to use subterranean steam to drive turbines."

NOT ONLY CURE, BUT PROLONG LIFE

This was the dream docent Irina Logunova, director of the Institute of Radiology, brought to the rostrum.

The majority of the scientists discussed what in their view *would* be—Irina Logunova discussed what *would not* be. There will be no treacherous diseases constantly threatening human life. Science is probing more deeply into the life of the human body in order to guide that life. The list of vanquished diseases is growing all the time: no longer does a man suffering from blood-poisoning consider himself condemned to death. Pneumonia has lost its terrors. Tb. is on the retreat. In the socialist countries the new science of longevity has grown up and is developing. We see the man of the future as healthy, strong, living to a great age, a lover of nature, of sport and long walks.

"Medicine in the Soviet Union," said Irina Logunova, "is striving above all to go over from the curative to the preventive. When at last all the causes of disease have been destroyed, medicine will remain only to avert illness and prevent its spread."

Is this fantasy, is this a matter for the distant future? Irina Logunova gave food for the imagination. She described the special installations sterilizing the air and the earth which will operate on the streets of the cities of the future. She spoke of the time when specific means would be found to regulate the activity of each gland or organ and influence the growth of man, his appearance and his capacity for work. She spoke of a medicine of the future able to give back to the aged their memories and their ability to work and new hope for continued life.

But, I would add, that is the hardest thing of all to imagine—ourselves twenty or thirty years from now.

What thoughts and feelings shall we have, what will be the relations between people? What problems of those relations will have been solved, and which will emerge?

One thing we can say with confidence: the test of time will be best withstood by those who day by day create the new things.



Books in Review

The Romance of Virgin Snows

Virgin Snows, by Nikolai Ulybin, Chita, 1957

Nikolai Ulybin is a writer who had a difficult life, one that reminds us of the life of Nikolai Ostrovsky. He grew up among the gold-fields of Trans-Baikalia. In 1939 he went to serve in the Soviet Army and fought in the Great Patriotic War. In 1952, when the wounds he had received during the liberation of Budapest made themselves felt again and confined Ulybin to his bed, he recalled his youth and wrote his first story about the gold-prospectors.

This story in many respects is not a finished work, yet its very first pages inspire a feeling of sympathy for its characters. This may be ascribed to the fact that the writer used material with which he was very familiar, material which he knew at first hand. The reader feels the indisputable authenticity of these portrayals, the foreman of the team of gold-prospectors, Gran'pa Pykh, the manager Uncle Grisha, the old geologist Sokhaty, and the veteran taiga hunter, engineer Argunov. The story holds the attention of the reader with the detailed description of the gold-pro prospector's profession which, once it gets into one's blood takes possession for all time.

Nikolai Ulybin transfers us to the "end of the world," in the year 1928. One grim winter in the taiga two teams of gold-prospectors came across rich gold deposits at the mouth of the Yakut River, Uchugei. Gold had drawn these different people to this wild, out-of-the-way place, and here the struggle between the old, proprietary world and the

new relations which are springing up among people proceeds with that same irreconcilability and sharpness as everywhere else in the country.

The young generation of gold-prospectors, such as Andreika, not only protest against the old, primitive methods of obtaining gold, methods which have outlived their age, but they also advocate a new attitude towards their work, and towards life's values.

Ulybin was most successful, perhaps, in his portrayals of the old gold-prospectors. Take Uncle Grisha, for instance. His long, difficult life had instilled in him a distrust of people, and a feeling of caution. That explains his hesitation: he cannot decide whether to wash the gold relying only on his own instinct, or to join an expedition which has arrived and which works according to scientific methods. The writer subtly shows how Uncle Grisha comes to the right decision.

The best aspects of Ulybin's story lie in the faithful portrayal of Siberian life through the speech and appearance of the characters, the amazing legends told by the gold-prospectors, and the inimitable aroma of the Yakut taiga, in a word, in all the "romance of virgin snows," whence the title of the story. The taiga landscapes, which the writer knew personally in his childhood and not from books, are painted vividly.

I should like to add Nikolai Ulybin's theme, the theme of Siberia which is presented in his book in historical perspective—Siberia which once had been a land for penal servitude and the "gold-rush," and which has now become a land of modern gigantic construction jobs—is a veritable gold vein in itself.

Tamara Gromova

The Homeless

Homecoming, by Natalia Ilyina, Moscow, 1957

The quiet, pedestrian life of Harbin was shattered in February 1920 when the thunder of the great Russian Revolution rolled up to far away Manchuria and the White Guards came flocking over Chinese soil.

The variegated crowd of emigrés was made up of all kinds of people. There was an officer of a punitive brigade who had escaped by a hair's breadth from the justice of the people's court; there was an old lady who possessed one of the most famous names in Russia; a cunning merchant who had brought with him no less than two mugsful of diamonds; and a member of Kolchak's "Siberian Government" who was consumed with burning ambition. In the midst of such society arrives Sofia Arsenyeva, the wife of a White Guard officer killed in the Civil War, with her small daughter Tanya and her old Nanny Praskovya. The story of this family is told in Natalia Ilyina's book *Homecoming*.

The long journey to the East covered many stages, through small wayside stations and unknown towns, among strangers who spoke a foreign tongue. In the mornings the blurred sun rose over lilac hills. And this was strange, too. The way stretched further and further away from Russia, further and further away from their native land. "Where are you taking me, madame?" the old Nanny asks sadly. And little Tanya repeats under her breath, just as though she were praying, the stories that old Praskovya had told her about Russia, about the wide sky, the rivers and forests. "A forest is a place where there are ever so many trees, and the wild strawberries grow right on the ground. . . ." Sofia Arsenyeva also dreams of Russia. But, blinded by White Guard propaganda, she is quite unable to understand what has happened in her native land. All that remains is to draw strength from fantastic rumours and to wait for the knell of bolshevism to toll.

To wait . . . but how long? A year, or two, or ten? Gradually the old generation of Russian emigrés dies out. "It is bitter to die in a strange land. . . . But Tanya will probably return. Please God, let her return," says the dying Praskovya.

Tanya, a snub-nosed, grey-eyed girl, has a hard childhood and an even harder youth. First she goes to Mr. Gregg's Russian-American school which seeks to wipe out all memories of Russia from the children's minds. Then come the poorly paid lessons, the ordeal of looking for a job, the mortification of not being able to realize her dream of becoming a painter. The theme of *Homecoming* which shows how the best of the emigrés find their native land once again, is expressed in Tanya's story. First with doubts and mistakes, groping in the dark, Tanya and her friends Dima Golubev, Victor Zolotarev and Volodya Kalitin begin to discover the truth about the Soviet Union. They live in the midst of terrible happenings, the brutality of the Russian emigrés turned fascists, the terror sown by the Japanese soldiers who occupy Manchuria. Their living conditions are the poorest of the poor and they are forced to accept the most humiliating work. The young people experience all the bitterness of the homeless, paying for the crimes and mistakes of their fathers.

Tanya first becomes aware of the call of her country when she picks up a grey envelope which contains her grandmother's letter that has come from "over there," from the Soviet Union. She learns that in Russia everyone can study and work according to his calling. The conclusion is obvious. And when Tanya hears Chaliapin give a concert in Harbin and sing *Along the Petersburg Road* she cries. "It was as if a little corner of her heart suddenly hurt her; it had been still before, but it had always been there; it had been sleeping and now it was waking up." Later, in Shanghai, Tanya goes to see the film *Chapayev*. And suddenly all the pain and humiliation that is stored up in her heart, all that she has seen and experienced wells up in her. She is joyfully excited when she watches Anka's machine-gun stall the White Guard attack. She repeats over and over again the words: "That's what they deserve, those brutes, those colonels." And then we understand the turning point that has taken place in her life.

Natalia Ilyina writes with great sharpness. Whether they are pitiful or repulsive, or just desperately unhappy, the characters of the emigrés are always very well drawn. However, this enormous subject of the life of the Harbin colony in all its different strata is too vast to be dealt with in a novel. The

passages that are not directly linked with the story of the Arsenyevs seem at times to be extraneous.

The author follows the life of her heroine up to 1935 and leaves her just as she is about to make the decision on which her whole future depends. The reader is convinced that Tanya and her friends will be able to break with the hard life of "the homeless" and that "homecoming" awaits them.

Oleg Mikhailov

The Dreamer of Kaluga

The Story of Tsiolkovsky, by Dmitri Dar, Leningrad, 1957

Now that the third Soviet artificial satellite has been launched into space and when even "voyages to the moon may soon leave the realm of science-fiction for the more practical realm of the engineers," as Academician Vavilov said, we often think of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky who is known as the father of the modern rocket.

The Russian scientist predicted a great future for rocket-travel at a time when it was only a dream. He did more than predict the future. He laid the theoretical basis for the development of rocket engineering.

Tsiolkovsky was a man of great creative imagination, devoting his whole life to science.

"It is hard to imagine a more difficult and terrible situation than the long years of solitude that fell to Tsiolkovsky's lot," wrote the newspaper *Pravda* in 1934 referring to the way the scientist lived before the Revolution. "Tsiolkovsky was buried alive in Kaluga; there was no one to respond to his passionate appeals, there was no one with whom he could discuss his most cherished dreams."

In *The Story of Tsiolkovsky* the Leningrad writer Dar describes the great inventor's character, stressing as the principal traits his singleness of purpose, his great reserves of energy and above all his tremendous crea-

tive imagination which helped him to overcome the stagnation of provincial life.

He shows the young Tsiolkovsky striding through the streets of the dull little town and dreaming of the time when it will become the first interspace airport in the world. And many years later, when he is 70 years old, we see him just as excited as a boy, for he has received a letter from Amundsen and is getting ready to fly to the North Pole.

The best passages of the story describe Tsiolkovsky's life after the October Revolution. The author picks out from a mass of different facts the most striking details which give the reader a vivid picture of the outstanding scientist against the background of those unforgettable revolutionary years.

They were years of storm and of famine, of the fight against the counter-revolutionaries. A group of revolutionary sailors patrolling one of the Kaluga districts enter Tsiolkovsky's house. The strange objects hanging on the walls make them suspicious. In the name of the Revolution they decide to arrest the old man as a suspect. But Tsiolkovsky talks them out of it, excitedly and enthusiastically telling his unusual listeners about the rockets of the future and the conquest of cosmic space, explaining how man's most daring dreams will come true. The sailors go away much impressed and subdued. And they have left a letter which we read today as a most interesting document of the times. Here is a passage from it:

"Having heard the report of the self-taught scientist who lives in Brutus Street, Kaluga, the general meeting of revolutionary soldiers and sailors of the special group for the struggle against the counter-revolutionaries has decided to ask Comrade Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the Council of People's Commissars and the Workers' and Peasants' Government to give their attention to interplanetary communications because the revolutionary proletariat wants to visit the asteroids in question where no bourgeois has ever set foot...."

The book brings to life the picture of a tireless enthusiast, a scientist who believed passionately in man's victory over cosmic space.

Na'alia Asmlova

A Book About Unusual Travels

Unusual Travels, by Gleb Golubev, Moscow, 1958

Everyone has heard of the great explorers who set out to discover new lands, of Captain Cook, Ivan Krusenstern, Georgi Sedov, Fridtjof Nansen, David Livingston, and Nikolai Przhevalsky. But are such people as the Chinese traveller Chang Chien, the Russian non-commissioned officer Philip Efremov, or the Hungarian scientist Armin Vambéry so well known?

In the second century B.C. Chang Chien crossed deserts and mountain ranges until he came to the valley of the Syr Darya. He was the first man to bring to China the tidings of the countries that lay far to the West. Efremov travelled for ten years through the lands of the Emirate of Bukhara, through Khiva, Persia, and India and at the end of the eighteenth century published a book about his wanderings. This was the first complete and accurate description of the customs of the people of Central Asia to be published in Russia. Few dared to enter the citadel of Moslem fanaticism. Even in the middle of the 19th century danger and death awaited the European who was bold enough to go near the sacred towns of the Emirate of Bukhara. On more than one occasion Vam-

béry's life hung by a thread when in 1863, disguised as a dervish, he took the risk of visiting Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and other "forbidden" cities. Vambéry was only saved from death by his deep knowledge of the people's language and religious customs, by his courage, his presence of mind and resourcefulness.

In his book *Unusual Travels* Gleb Golubev tells the story of such fascinating journeys. They may be called unusual because few of them were made merely for geographical purposes. Chang Chien travelled as an emissary to tribes that were China's allies. Vambéry was a linguist and went to Asia to seek the ancient birthplace of the Hungarians.

From the exciting history of geographical voyages Golubev has chosen a few episodes in the life of people with inquisitive minds and stout hearts, people from the most varied countries and periods, from the traveller of ancient China to Alain Bombard, our French contemporary who in 1952 crossed the Atlantic in a rubber boat. The great range of periods is not in the least irritating. All these stories collected together in the book have much in common apart from the unusual life of the travellers. There is a unity of purpose in the author's research and his attempts to show the difficult path before explorers, to interest young people in the romance of great journeys, of great exploits for a great aim.

Igor Ratsky

INFORMATION BULLETIN
OF THE SOVIET PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

Since May of this year the Soviet Preparatory Committee for the Conference of Asian and African Writers has been publishing an *Information Bulletin*, which keeps the Soviet and foreign reader informed about the preparations for the Conference. The bulletin comes out once a month in five languages: Russian, Chinese, Arabic, French and English.

It published a full report of the June Preparatory Conference held in Moscow at which the following writers participated: Tara Sankar Bannerji and Mulk Raj Anand of India, Ko Pao-chuan and Yuan Shui-po of China, Yousef Elsebai and Mursi Saad el-Din of the United Arab Republic, Sharaf Rashidov, Alexei Surkov and Alexander Chakovsky of the U.S.S.R., and Yoshie Hotta of Japan. The bulletin also printed the "Communiqué" and "Appeal to the Writers of Asia and Africa" drawn up by the participants of the Preparatory Conference, in which they call upon the writers of the two continents to take an active part in their own lands in the preparatory work for the Tashkent Conference.

The columns of *Information Bulletin* were made available to foreign and Soviet writers who wished to express their opinion about the aims and tasks of the coming Writers' Conference.

The section called "Comments of Foreign Writers" carries interviews with participants in the Preparatory Conference. The famous Indian writer, Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, who was Secretary General of the Conference of Asian Writers held in Delhi in 1956, expressed his ideas about the coming Conference as follows: "I think that intellectuals are well fitted by their professions to uproot the sources of fear and hatred, and they can touch the consciences of men deeply. Thus, together, they can help to ease international tension and rid the world of the threat of war."

Commenting on the need for close cultural rapprochement at the Conference, the Japanese writer Yoshie Hotta said: "Knowledge of one another is the basis for the development of culture. That, indisputably, is the first condition for cultural development. The Tashkent Conference should contribute to the attainment of this condition before all else. . . .

"The writers of all Asian and African countries have their intricate, difficult problems. But if we succeed in understanding one another and in strengthening our unity at our Conference, it will be possible to find ways for our further joint development."

Speaking of the tasks of the Conference, Yousef Elsebai, writer and public figure of the United Arab Republic, declared: "There have been many international writers' conferences in which the problems of the literary world were discussed at length. But the voices of the Asian-African writers were, if not wholly lost, at least unheard. . . . And it is the job of this Conference to put things right. It should try to evolve a new ideology for Asian-African writers, an ideology that would take into account their past, their present and their future. It should not be merely a soap box to repeat slogans, but a real forum to discuss, examine and decide."

The writers Ko Pao-chuan (China), Suat Derwish (Turkey), Henri de La Bastide (France), Tomoji Abe, Jun Takami and Suekichi Aono (Japan), Manuel Cruz (Philippines), Ganardan Sam (Nepal), Alioune Diop (Africa), Abd el-Wahab El-Bayati (Iraq), and the German writers Ludwig Renn and Stefan Heym expressed their warm support of the coming Conference through the medium of the Bulletin. The August number carried a long letter from the Indian writer S. Raut Roy, in which he speaks of the significance and tasks of the Tashkent Conference and also submits a draft for the programme of work of the Conference and questions to be discussed at it. He said, among other things: "The present role of the Soviet Union as the initiator of the Tashkent Conference of Asian-African Writers should be accepted with the greatest trust by all peace-loving, cultured peoples the world over, and especially by the peoples of Asia and Africa."

Others who wrote in the Bulletin, sharing their reminiscences of the Delhi Conference of Asian Writers and their opinions about the coming Tashkent Conference are the Tajik writer Mirsaid Mirshakar, the Turkmenian writers Kara Seitliyev and Berdy Kerbabayev, the Armenian writer Garegin Sevunts, and the Russian writer Anatoli Sofronov.

The Bulletin always has a section called "In the Soviet Preparatory Committee," which tells of the work of the Soviet Committee on the Tashkent Writers' Conference. It contains items about the organization of national preparatory committees in the Asian and African countries and the republics of the Soviet East. Aid committees have been formed in India, the United Arab Republic, China, Mongolia, Korea, Indonesia, Japan and other countries. In the Soviet Union aid committees have been organized by the Unions of Writers of Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaidjan, Armenia, Georgia, Kirghizia, Turkmenia, and the Tatar Republic.

The Asian and African Writers' Conference Preparatory Committee began its work in Tashkent in August. The international preparatory meeting, which was held in Moscow in June, invited representatives of Algeria, Afghanistan, Burma, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Cameroons, Ceylon, China, Mongolia, Nigeria, the United Arab Republic, Pakistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, the U.S.S.R., and the Union of South Africa to take part in the work of the Asian-African Preparatory Committee.



The Pursuit (Haji Murat)

Evgeni Lanceret

*All plates in this issue are reproductions
of Soviet artists' illustrations
to Leo Tolstoy's works.*



Katyusha Maslova (*Resurrection*)

Alexander Kharshak



A Meeting in Tula

(Conference of Writers of Four Regions)

There is no special branch of the Union of Writers of the U.S.S.R. in Tula, yet despite that fact the literary life of this old Russian town becomes ever more animated. The young Tula writers are definitely maturing. They have already put out thirteen issues of a literary anthology. Writers of Tula, Ryazan, Orel and Kaluga regions recently met together and discussed the question of organizing a new literary journal in which the Tula writers might be able to work together with those of the neighbouring regions. To put out their own journal in an edition of 20,000 is no slight undertaking and one which imposes a great responsibility upon the writers. The discussion that took place at the meeting was most serious.

The first thing to be decided was: What will the united literary forces of these four regions be like? The pages of the local anthologies supply the answer to this question. Tula fiction writers, especially the authors of short stories, have been clearly successful in their work. Maria Kazakova, a journalist, had her first stories printed seven years ago. Recently a volume of her tales appeared in Tula, among them, *The Teachers' Grove*, a favourite of the Tula people. The author tries to look into the secret recesses of the souls of ordinary people, and she achieves her goal in a subtle, lyrical way. Natalia Parygina, also from Tula and a "rival" of Kazakova's as regards genre, shows an inclination for the publicistic style of writing. This is seen in her stories *Personal Happiness* and *A Family Gathering*, which have just been published.

Then there is Evgeni Gorbov, an experienced writer from Orel. We spoke of him in the review of the Voronezh magazine, *Podym*, printed in the May 1958 issue of *Soviet Literature*. The tales and narratives by Gorbov, like those of Natalia Parygina and Maria Kazakova, are promise of good fiction in the future journal.

The participants of the conference, when discussing works of fiction, made some important criticism of the novel, *The Harvest*, by Alexander Chuvakin, a young writer from the ancient Russian city of Ryazan. The story centers about the important theme of kolkhos life, but it has certain shortcomings. Although the Ryazan writers came out in defence of their colleague, the general opinion was that his manner of presenting vital problems, his insufficient mastery of the art of writing and the poor psychological studies of his characters spoiled a good story.

In the field of poetry, however, the Ryazan writers have definitely outstripped their neighbours. Ryazan, by the way, is the birthplace of one of the most popular Russian poets, Sergei Esenin. No wonder that at a literary gathering held at the end of the Tula conference and attended by a large audience of readers, the Ryazan poets carried off the laurels. Alexander Levushkin was acclaimed the best. He has written several poems and two volumes of verse. Ryazan also has its own fabulist, Evgeni Osipov. He read two of his fables, after which Tula readers kept sending notes up to the platform asking that Osipov's fables be published in the local press.

Dramaturgy also came up for discussion at the conference. Of the plays published in the anthologies *A Nice Chap* by a young Kaluga writer, Vladimir Narozhny, was considered the best. The play, which was staged at the Kaluga Drama Theatre, is based on students' life. Narozhny brought a second play to Tula, a drama about the heroic deeds of young people of his own age from the town of Lyudinov, who were tortured by the Nazis 15 years ago.

After discussing the material published in the regional anthologies and having criticized their own work, the writers of Tula, Ryazan, Orel and Kaluga decided they could and would put out a joint journal *Yasnaya Polyana*, named after Leo Tolstoy's estate, outside of Tula (now the Leo Tolstoy Museum).

Those present were unanimous in their desire that a volume of the finest works by writers of these four regions, be published by the end of the current year, a book which, as they put it, would be the "dress rehearsal" for the future journal.

Joan of Arc

Violetta Bovt, of the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre, has been the first Soviet ballerina to represent France's beloved heroine on the ballet stage. Below she tells *Soviet Literature* a little about her work on this role.

"Performing Joan is a hard job," admits Violetta Bovt.

Looking at her, one remembers the picture she presented on the stage: a slender figure in silver armour standing proudly with head held high beside a waving banner. The slight, girlish figure accentuated the impression of immense inner strength and deep conviction. The actress' eyes shone out of her pale narrow face with faith and resolution. Such creative concentration must indeed tax one's strength.

When asked how long she worked on the role, Violetta Bovt replied:

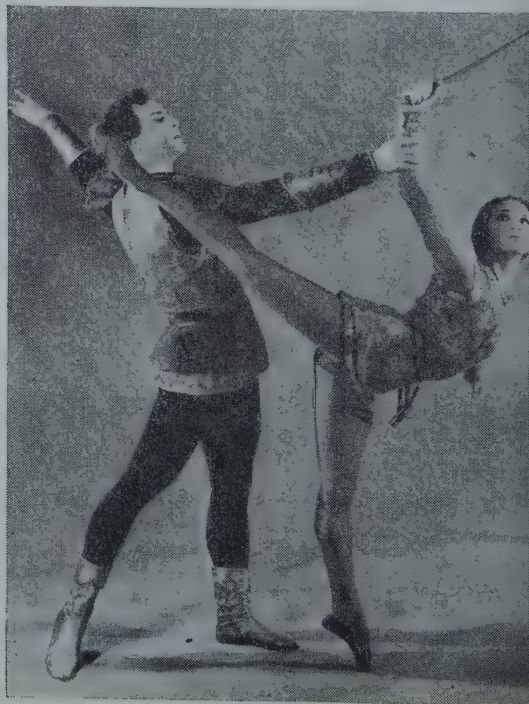
"As far as rehearsals are concerned, only about a month and a half, but before that there was a very long period of preparation. The thought of doing Joan has been with me for several years. Even before our French tour in 1956 our troupe had been talking of staging *Joan of Arc* and I'd begun to dream of the part. But I was afraid my appearance would count against me. I pictured Joan as a stern warrior in armour, with sword in hand. If that was right, the role was not for me. To make sure, to see how painters and sculptors had visualized her down through the ages, I took to studying all the pictures of her I could find. Just about then a friend brought me this statuette from France.

The dancer pointed to the small ivory model of the Paris statue standing on her desk.

"And then," she continued, "our troupe went to Paris. On a clear sunny day I stood on a street corner there gazing up at this young girl on horseback. She did not look at all formidable, just a simple, nice, ordinary girl; not a holy saint, not a proud Amazon, but, primarily, a human being. Many other representations of her confirmed this impression, as, for instance, Chapu's statue of her as a shepherdess, or the fresco in the Pantheon showing her at the coronation of Charles VII. Here they are," she said, taking a folder from her desk drawer. "I copied the ones I liked best so as to be able to refer to them later.

"But there was something else I realized while I was in France. I realized that to the French Joan of Arc is not just a historical figure associated only with the remote past: she is still loved as one who has but recently been right there with them, a living being among other living beings. And every time the French nation rises to defend its

Violetta Bovt and Evgeni Kuzmin in the Ballet "Joan of Arc"



liberty and its honour, Joan of Arc comes back to life in the persons of hundreds of other national heroines. That is why she could be played, I thought, as a very young, very simple and innocent peasant girl. But at the same time it must not be forgotten that she was a person of deep understanding. Of that I became convinced when I read the documents relating to her trial.

"I did a great deal of reading about Joan of Arc while working on this role. I know what Shakespeare and Voltaire, who tried to knock her off her pedestal, thought of her. I read Schiller, and Anatole France, and Shaw, and Mark Twain, and many others. I read Jean Anouilh's play *The Lark*. I looked up the special studies about her. And, also, I collected all the photographs I could lay hands on of actresses who played Joan either on the dramatic stage or in Chalkovsky's opera."

Violetta Bovt paused here to take out a package of photographs and foreign magazines. Among them were pictures of Russia's great dramatic actress, Maria Yermolova in Schiller's tragedy, of the Irish actress Siobhan McKenna in Shaw's play, of the Brazilian actress Maria de Castro, who played *The Lark* in Sao Paulo. Showing us a photograph of Julie Harris in the same role, the ballet dancer said:

"When I look at her I feel that she has the simplicity, humour, and real faith essential for the part.

"However, as a dancer, my own interpretation of the character must necessarily be based on the ballet music and the general choreographic design. I like Nikolai Peiko's music very much; it is emotional, it really stirs you, I can visualize in it both the strong-willed heroine and the innocent young girl who, facing her first experience of love, is drawn and frightened by it at the same time. But Joan's strongest trait, as I see it, was her sense of duty. It was her duty to save France, and though she suffered, she had no right to even think of herself until her goal was achieved.

"Working on the production, ballet-master Vladimir Burmeister and myself sought situations that would help to disclose the heroine's character as I understood it. Often we tried several versions of one and the same scene before we found a solution that satisfied us both. Take the episode on the square before the Cathedral of Rheims, when, after the coronation of the Dauphin, Joan of Arc is accused of treason. Joan seeks the King's protection: surely he, who owes her so much, will not forsake her. At first we had Joan fall on her knees before him and even crawl a few steps towards him. But it didn't work. I felt I'd been placed in a false position. Joan knows that she is innocent before the King and the Church, before France. If she is guilty in any way, then only towards herself, for permitting love to enter her heart. That is why, in the next act, when she is in banishment, she can logically ask that her sword be taken from her, for she considers herself unworthy. That I can well believe. But here, before the King, she simply stands and faces him squarely—will his conscience really permit him to denounce her? And that is how I play the scene now.

"The costume a ballet-dancer wears is very important to her. I wanted the two costumes I wear in this production (the peasant frock and the warrior's suit of armour) to be both historically authentic and suitable for the ballet. I myself drew innumerable sketches before I hit on the right ones.

"The ballet has been running only a short while as yet," Violetta Bovt said in conclusion, "and I realize very well that my work on the role is still far from finished. Although I've been dancing in *Swan Lake* for nearly five years now, there's still a great deal in my performance that doesn't satisfy me. I am still seeking for new colours, new touches. Yet *Swan Lake* is a ballet in which the dancer can draw on the experience of many generations of brilliant performers. In this new ballet I have to find my own way."

News in Brief

"Illustrated Magazine of Science Fiction, Adventures and Thrilling Journeys." Such is the sub-title of this new literary monthly, *Ural'ski Sledopyt* (Urals Pathfinder), the first number of which has come out in the city of Sverdlovsk.

It contains the works of local young writers, poets, journalists and explorers. The magazine is richly illustrated.

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An exhibition dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the death of Fyodor Chaliapin has been opened at the Bakhrushin Central Theatrical Museum in Moscow.

The museum has collected numerous mementos associated with this outstanding Russian singer. Among them is a poster of the Ufa Opera Theatre dating back to the year 1891, a poster in which the name of chorus singer Chaliapin was first mentioned. The exhibits also contain some little-known press comments, reviews by his contemporaries about his debuts on the stage of St. Petersburg, and about his tours abroad which won the young singer world recognition.

Of great interest are some rare photographs which speak of Chaliapin's friendship with Gorky, Repin, Kuprin, Rachmaninov, and other outstanding figures in the field of Russian art.

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A scenario by Sergei Eсенин, called *The Beckoning Dawn*, dedicated to the October Revolution, was recently published for the first time in the poet's native town of Ryazan, in the journal *Literaturnaya Ryazan* (Literary Ryazan). Eсенин wrote it in the spring of 1918 in collaboration with three other poets, friends of his, but at that time they did not get around to its production. The manuscript of the scenario had been considered lost and was accidentally discovered in the archives many years later.

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At the beginning of summer an exhibition was opened in Moscow of the works of Nikolai Roerich, outstanding Russian painter, who spent many years abroad, where he died in 1947. The exhibition attracted much attention, about 80,000 having visited it in a month and a half. On display was a large collection of paintings and études, chiefly of the "Himalayan series," brought to the U.S.S.R. in 1957 by Yuri Roerich, son of the artist, who returned to his native land.

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Raphael's two originals, *Madonna Conestabile* and *The Virgin with Joseph the Beardless*, which are on display at the Hermitage in Leningrad, are well known in the Soviet Union. In order to enable the Soviet public to become better acquainted with the work of this great Italian artist and to commemorate the 475th anniversary of his birth an exhibition of reproductions of his works

which are in the museums of Dresden, London, Paris, and Madrid was opened this summer at the library of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Arts in Leningrad.

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Leningrad poets and translators are completing their work on the first edition in the Russian language of the selected works of Julius Vekselä, outstanding Finnish poet of the end of the 19th century. About 80 poems and his tragedy *Taniel Jurt*, have been included in this volume.

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The U.S.S.R. Academy of Arts has organized in Leningrad an exhibition of Russian portraiture of the 18th, 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The works on display come from the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, the Pushkin House, the Central Repository of the Palace Museums in Pavlovsk, and also from private collections. The exhibits include portraits by such outstanding Russian painters as Dmitri Levitsky, Vladimir Borovikovsky, Orest Kiprensky, Karl Bryulov, Ivan Kramskoy, Ilya Repin, Valentin Serov, and Mikhail Nesterov.

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Much interest has been aroused by the works of unknown Russian painters, the authors of portraits of people from various strata of society, peasants, officials, merchants, petty nobility and the clergy. A considerable number of the portraits exhibited were put on public display for the first time.

*

Anniversary celebrations in honour of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Vasili Kapnist, outstanding Russian writer of the 18th century, were held in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev. One of his most interesting works is his *Ode on Slavery*, which is a protest against the ukaz of Empress Catherine II making serfs of the Ukrainian peasants who had been free until then. Kapnist's comedy *Slanderer* played an important part in the development of Russian satirical dramaturgy. He is also the author of the *Appeal for Aid for Greece*, which was addressed to the European powers and asked them to help the Greek patriots fighting for the liberation of their country.

The Institute of Russian Literature (The Pushkin House) of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences is preparing to put out a new collection of Vasili Kapnist's works. A careful study of archive materials will make it possible to free these works from the censor's distortions.

*

The organizational committee of the R. S. F. S. R. Writers' Union has held three All-Russian Seminars for young writers. Those who took part in the seminars are people of the most diverse professions—engineers, teachers, armymen, workers, doctors, students—who are taking their very first steps in the field of literature. Under the guidance of experienced writers they discussed general problems of writing and individual works.

A seminar of fiction writers, held in Leningrad, was attended by 49 young authors from various towns of the Russian Federation. Among those who directed the work of the seminar were the writers Mikhail Alexeyev, Boris Galin, Daniil Granin, Vitali Zakrutkin, Vera Ketlinskaya, Vladimir Lidin, and Vera Panova. After an attentive study of the work of the new writers several of them were recommended for membership in the Writers' Union. A considerable number of literary youth were given free accommodation tickets to the Houses for Creative Work of the Writers' Union, where they will be afforded

the finest conditions for literary work.

In Smolensk 58 young poets gathered at the seminar held there. Among them were people from Moscow, Leningrad, Novosibirsk, Taganrog, Kuibyshev, and elsewhere. The seminar was conducted by the eminent writers and critics Nikolai Rylenkov, Sergei Vasilyev, Yaroslav Smelyakov, Victor Pertsov, and others. At this seminar of poets a whole group of talented youth were recommended for admission to the Writers' Union.

The seminar of young playwrights was held in the Writers' House for Creative Work, which is situated in Maleyevka, a picturesque suburb of Moscow.

The members of this seminar were authors of works which had been awarded prizes during the All-Russian contest for the best play written on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. They spent a whole month analyzing and discussing the plays of the members of the seminar, under the guidance of experienced playwrights.

L E T T E R S

TO AND FROM

THE EDITORS

THOSE RUSSIAN NAMES!

Permit me second the suggestion of Mr. George W. Foster, New Zealand, that proper nouns be anglicized in your English edition. I would carry the simplification further and stick to one name per character and not use two or three pet names. If gubernia means district just say "district" and all the English will understand you. That splendid yarn *Cruelty*, your best for some time; was marred by a word like uyezd, whatever that may mean. May your motto be: "If you can't say it in plain English, leave it out".

Chas. T. J. Edmonds

Canada

Dear Mr. Edmonds,

Your wish for having Russian proper-names anglicized is understandable, of course. But then don't you think we should try to convey to our foreign readers some of the Russian ways and customs? For example, it is customary in Russia to call grown-up people by their first names and patronymics, like Anton Ivanovich, say, or Nina Petrovna; if we drop it for the sake of simplification we shall inevitably lose much of the peculiar national flavour. It doesn't bother you when you see William called Bill by different people in one and the same story. Why should it be more complicated to accept Dima for the full name of Dmitri?

We agree with you that the abundance of pet names and diminutives used in Russian should be limited somewhat for foreign readers, but do you really think they should be left out altogether?

As for gubernia and uyezd this is a problem of quite another kind. These administrative divisions, which do to a certain extent correspond to modern region and district, were used before the Revolution in Russia and were done away with only some years after the establishment of Soviet power; so it would not be right not to make this distinction in stories describing the years when such divisions existed. Moreover, these

words are even included in English and American dictionaries. So perhaps you will agree with us that sometimes it is not so easy to decide on leaving something out on the grounds that it cannot be said in absolutely plain English.

EDITORS

WELCOME CONTRIBUTION

I want to share with you some of my impressions of the latest issues of your magazine.

Mikhail Stelmakh's story *Let the Blood of Man Not Flow* is a really absorbing story, much in the same style of Mikhail Sholokhov. Stelmakh's characters really live, we can love his heroes, we can understand the confused minds of the peasants.... The most beautiful chapter in the book is I think the 28th, here we have the foster-mother, the woman who built into the boy his love for the land and its people, who tended and encouraged his heroic nature, sorrowed with him and though apprehensive about his future urged him to go on.

Surely she is symbolic for the mothers of all Eolsheviks. Only a short chapter, the foster-mother is barely mentioned throughout the whole book, and yet the few words said about her leave one with the impression that her character is stamped on every page.

I loved this story.

Here in this country in spite of the intense reactionary propaganda the Peace Movement is growing, broadening out and is now a powerful force which will with the support of the Trade Unions start a big campaign to win the battle for peace. This is a change from a few years ago, when we canvassed to ban the A-Bomb we could only collect a few signatures.

Last night I had the very great pleasure of hearing and seeing David Oistrakh in our City Hall, the applause of the audience (about 3,000) was loud and prolonged, I do not remember any other artiste receiving such an ovation. He gave us four extra pieces as encores, we would have demanded more only our hands and arms were tired with clapping; besides we began to realize that we had already abused his generosity far too much. David is our first Soviet artiste, a breath of fresh air after so many pulp singers and weeping crooners from America. Of course we have had one or two good singers from that country, but not until they send us Paul Robeson will they be able to equal the respect that David Oistrakh has won, after his performance our people are going to demand more and still more from your country.

I am enclosing two short pieces of mine: one written on the occasion of the forty-first anniversary of the October Revolution, the other on the same day that the news came through that American bombers were on their way to your country and only turned back when it was seen that the American radar screen had mistaken a flock of geese for a squadron of Soviet planes.

Forty-First Anniversary of the Soviet Union

My dear, my much respected Friends,
My tempered steel, my beacon fire
Mine the voice the message sends

From people here who do admire
And on this well remembered date
We recognize the debt we owe
Your deeds again we will relate
In telling make our friendship grow
Until the land that gave us birth
With other lands will full agree
That man shall own a peaceful earth
And walk this earth, proud and free.

Brinkmanship

How thin the line t'wixt War and Peace
Is seen to be a flock of geese
And planes in flight with lethal load
To drop on cities and explode
Then 'ere the mushroom cloud has blown
Man will reap what he has sown.

Yours Sincerely
Jim Skea

HUMOUR AND SATIRE

Dear Editors,

I wish to make a contribution to the "Humour and Satire" section of your interesting magazine of which I am a regular reader.

I have been moved to do this after having learned that Major General Andrew McNamara, the U.S. Army quarter-master general, has made what he describes as "a fabulous scientific discovery." He claims that by feeding broccoli and cabbage to victims of radioactive fall-out from nuclear explosions,— "Where death is inevitable, it may be possible to postpone it for several days."

Now his information reminded me of the nonsensical situations in that book for children which is loved by so many adults, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, particularly of the Walrus and the Carpenter who took the Oysters out for a trot but gobbled them up, whilst talking of "Cabbages and Kings."

So I wrote a little story which I called *Allies in Wonderland* with Die Hard and the Army Man taking on the roles of the Walrus and the Carpenter, and the Allies personifying the peoples of various nations, great and small, who are being pushed on to the path of a new catastrophic war. I apologize to Lewis Carroll, but then it is all in a good cause, that of Peace.

Allies in Wonderland

"Oh dear!" said the poor little Allies after they had read the paper, "everything seems topsy turvy in this Western World of ours." And turning to Tweedledee they said, "Please, please tell us how to get out of the wood."

"Recite 'The Die Hard and the Army Man,' "Tweedledum said to Tweedledee who smiled gently and began at once:

"The Bombs were hanging o'er the World,
Hanging in all their might,
Doing their best to turn the day
Into the blackest night,
And this was very sad because
It caused a lot of fright.

The H-bomb and the Atom Bomb
Were looming there and then,
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of men;
If they were only cleared away,
Why! we would say 'Amen!'

"The time has come," the Die Hard said,
"To talk of many things;
Of ships that shoot—and Atom Bombs
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot
Where Sam an H-bomb flings.

"O Allies come and walk with us!"
The Die Hard did implore.

"A pleasant talk, a pleasant walk
Along the Brink of War:
For we will give you guns and gold,
You cannot ask for more!
And if you'll make a nuclear test
We'll give you tanks galore!"

The Allies waited in a row
And proffered humble thanks.
They took the guns and took H-Bombs
To stiffen up their ranks;
But paid for all of this, you know,
With money from their banks.
"We'll carry out experiments
On little Allies-all,

With radio-active rays, my dears,
And count how many fall,

Then feed you with blue broccoli
And cabbage leaves so sweet.
An Atom Bomb and Broccoli
Will be a lovely treat!"

"But not for us," the Allies cried,
Turning a little blue,
"After such kindness that would be
A dismal thing to do!"
"The Bomb is mine," the Die Hard said,
"Do you admire the view?"

"It seems a shame," the Allies sobbed,
"To play us such a trick,
After you've brought us out so far,
And made us trot so quick!"
The Army Man said nothing but
"The broccoli makes 'em sick!"

"I weep for you," the Die Hard said:
"I deeply sympathize."
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size
Holding a silken handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

"I love you so, my Allies dear,
You've had a pleasant run!"
Shall we be trotting home again?"
But answer came there none —
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd scared off every one.

Tweedledee stopped and asked the Allies archly what they thought of his poem.

"They are both very unpleasant characters," they replied, "but it's only a fairy-tale, after all, and we do so want you to tell us how to get out of the wood, it's like a horrid nightmare."

Tweedledee and Tweedledum looked at the Allies with great surprised and solemn eyes and, bowing politely, said,

"Well! If you can't see the way out of the wood after that you must be the silliest little Allies that ever wuz."

I shall be glad if you manage to publish my contribution to your magazine.

Tom Williams

P. S. I have sent a copy of this to Radio Moscow.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Gafur Gulyam was born in 1903 in the town of Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In 1918 he finished teachers' courses and for a number of years taught in school. Later he worked on the staff of newspapers and journals.

Gulyam first appeared in print in 1923. He wrote poetry, essays, stories, and humorous tales.

Gulyam's poetry is devoted to themes of Soviet reality.

In his poems *On the Roads of Turksib*, *Two Acts*, *Neldash*, *Kunan-Bashrak*, and others, he tells of the historical transformations that took place in the life of the Uzbek people in the thirties.

During the Patriotic War Gulyam wrote many poems about the selfless struggle of the Soviet people for freedom and independence.

His verse of post-war years reveals the poetry of the everyday life of Soviet people, as in his *All Is Thine*, and *Hail, Communism*.

In resorting to modern themes and people Gulyam at the very beginning of his creative work decidedly broke away from the antiquated poetic canons, and introduced into Uzbek poetry the conversational style of Mayakovsky's verse, and fresh, verbal nuances.

His work is many-sided intimate lyrics being combined with publicistic writing.

Gulyam has translated into the Uzbek language a number of works by Russian and foreign classics. He has also been an active member of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences since 1943.

Alexander Karaganov, Candidate of Philology, was born in Vologda region in 1915. A graduate of the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy, and Literature, he is a literary critic, the author of the book *Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov on Realism* and a number of other theoretical essays on modern Soviet literature and drama.

Iosif Greenberg was born in 1906 in the town of Zaporozhye, the Ukraine. Graduated from Leningrad University. Greenberg's critical works are, in the main, devoted to questions of Soviet poetry. He is author of the book *Eduard Bagritsky* (1940), *Nikolai Tikhonov* (1952), *Lyrical Poetry* (1955), and also numerous critical articles and reviews.

Konstantin Lomunov was born in Vologda in 1911. Graduated from the Lenin Teachers Training Institute. At present works as senior scientific associate at the Leo Tolstoy Museum in Moscow. He is author of a monograph *The Dramaturgy of Leo Tolstoy* (1956) and also compiled the book *Leo Tolstoy on Art and Literature* (2 vol. 1958).

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These are the opening lines of the concluding part of "Perekop," Oles Gonchar's novel about the fall of the last bulwark of Wrangel's army on the Perekop Isthmus, which will be printed in "Soviet Literature" No. 11.